

Summer 2023

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# In this issue...



## ‘Meet the author’ – Dame Jacqueline Wilson

Dame Jacqueline Wilson has met with pupils from Westholme, Lancashire, and schools from around the area during a special ‘meet the author event’.

Held in Westholme’s Croston Theatre, visitors were able to get a signed copy of her latest book ‘The Magic Faraway Tree: A new adventure’, inspired by Enid Blyton – detailing the adventures of Milo, Mia and Birdy, three children on a countryside holiday, who wander into the enchanted forest.

The Magic Faraway Tree is home to remarkable creatures including a fairy called Silky, her best friend Moonface and more. Birdy is delighted to find that fairies are real. Even her older brother and sister are soon won over by the magic of the Faraway Tree and the extraordinary places they discover above it, including the Land of Unicorns. But not every land is so much fun, danger looms in the Land of Dragons.

Dame Jacqueline Wilson has written over 100 books and won numerous prizes. Her breakthrough to fame was in 1991 with The Story of Tracy Beaker, and the former Children’s Laureate has also had many of her books turned into successful TV and stage adaptations. The Magic Faraway Tree by Enid Blyton was her favourite book as a young child.

Pictured: Pupils Zayn, Isabelle, Harriet and Hamza with Principal, Dr Robson, and Prep Academic Assistant Head Mrs Emma Robson meet Dame Jacqueline Wilson

## Cover background

## Earth Centre vision

Kingsley School in Devon is working towards developing a curriculum and culture centred around sustainability, ecology, and environmentalism.

To find out how they are working to achieve this see page 6.

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## Is Your School Mentioned?

## Schools featured in this issue include:

ACS International School Egham; Barnard Castle School; Bede’s Prep School; Beech Hall School; Beech Lodge School; Bolton School Girls Division; Brentwood Prep; Bryanston; Dame Allan’s Schools; Derby Grammar School; Downe House; The Elms; Felsted; Forres Sandle Manor School; Guildford High School; Highfield and Brookham Schools; Kilgraston School; King’s High School Warwick; Kingsley School; Kirkham Grammar; Lancing College; Leweston School; Mayfield School; Northampton High School; Norwich High School for Girls; Oakhill School; Park School for Girls; Reigate Grammar School; Sibford School; Sidcot School; St Albans High School for Girls; St Benedict’s School; St Margaret’s School, Hertfordshire; Stephen Perse Foundation; Stonyhurst; Town Close School; Ursuline Preparatory School; Wells Cathedral School; Woodbridge School; York House School

## See you in September!

This combined June/July issue is our last for this academic year. We’ll be back in September. Enjoy your summer!



# Recruiting and retaining teachers: how do we solve the current crisis?

Deputy Head at Downe House, Berkshire, Matthew Godfrey, takes a look at the issue of recruitment and retention, reflecting on his experiences in the state sector and what can be learned from the independent sector.

The National Education Union recently conducted a poll of nearly 1,800 teachers which suggested that half of teachers in England will quit within five years. Perhaps more worryingly, a quarter of teachers who have qualified in the past ten years have now left the profession. The most common reason for wanting to leave is due to “excessive workload”. The teaching unions also believe that a real terms pay cut and general underspending in education are significant contributing factors.

A teacher’s workload can be very demanding. From planning lessons and marking work to dealing with paperwork and providing pastoral care or extra support to children who need it, is time consuming. At times, this can also feel overwhelming, especially during a long and relentless term with busy days and minimal breaks – and even more so if a teacher is inexperienced, has a full timetable of lessons and is facing challenging behaviour from pupils.

But arguably, these factors alone are not the real reason that so many teachers are leaving the profession. Although the reasons are different for every individual, the tipping point tends to come when teachers feel undervalued or unsupported. I know this to be true because it happened to me.

My first teaching post was back in 2000, when I joined an inner-city comprehensive in London as a newly qualified teacher of English. It was an extremely challenging school at the time for a range of reasons: weak leadership, large class sizes, and it served an underprivileged area. At that time there were a core of talented and committed teachers, but it was very unusual for anyone to stay in their post for more than a couple of years. Like many new teachers, I was idealistic and driven and determined to do my best for the pupils. I was promoted to Head of English a mere 18 months after joining, and although I would love to believe this was based purely on recognition of talent, the truth is that the school would have struggled to find anyone else to fill the role.

In this case, the main reason for

staff leaving was the failure of the senior leadership team to implement an effective behaviour policy and provide adequate support for the teachers. Many of the 950 pupils behaved in challenging ways if given the opportunity. It was exhausting and demoralising when such behaviour was not properly dealt with because it became very difficult to teach effectively. As a result, I left my post just 18 months after my promotion.

Of course, teaching can be a wonderful and extremely rewarding career choice given the right support and the right opportunities. There are generous holidays and gaining a teaching qualification also gives you a professional status, a clear career structure, the ability to work in any location, and close to home if you wish. There are many other benefits, too, including the potential for terrific job satisfaction and being able to make a difference to the lives of others. However, it is remarkable how quickly these benefits can almost feel worthless if a teacher feels undervalued or unsupported in their place of work.

The upside is, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that if teachers feel empowered to teach, and if they feel valued and well supported in other ways, too, they will have high job satisfaction and will likely remain in their post for many years. I have seen clear evidence of this in both the maintained and independent school sectors.

As well as my role as Deputy Head, I am also a governor at a highly successful comprehensive in Wembley, north London. Its profile is similar to the school which I joined as an NQT: it also serves an economically deprived area and many of its pupils also come from challenging backgrounds and enter the school from underperforming primaries. Yet this school has outstanding staff retention, which means that none of its annual budget is spent on supply teachers because the absence rate of the teachers is negligible. Astonishingly, many large comprehensives will spend up to £250,000 per year on supply staff who are called in to cover vacancies of staff who are

absent due to stress or illness.

The headmistress at the Wembley school often tells me that her teachers are so committed because they feel valued, empowered, and motivated by the school’s strong set of values, and the way in which it is followed through with an effective, ‘tough love’ behaviour policy. The latter is upheld and enforced consistently and rigorously by all levels of management in the school. Pupils and staff feel fully supported and safe.

All the teachers are provided with ongoing, regular training and their lessons are frequently observed by the senior leadership team; this enables all teachers, especially the NQTs, to receive detailed, supportive and helpful feedback on an almost daily basis, and it also means that poor behaviour is easily tracked and stopped, which is key.

The low absence rate amongst teachers saves much of the annual budget being spent on supply teachers. This means that more teachers can be recruited, reducing the number of lessons allocated to each teacher. This also frees up time for more effective planning, marking and other out of class activities.

In any school, a strong ethos of colleagues supporting each other so that teaching resources do not need to be constantly prepared or reinvented is vital. Instead, these should be shared and improved upon a continuous basis, saving unnecessary extra workload and improving outcomes incrementally. Instilling a clear homework policy will, likewise, encourage meaningful consolidation of learned material rather than extra tasks which need to be marked alongside classwork. It is striking how these factors can result in teachers who feel fully able to teach without hindrance.

When it comes to teacher retention, there is also a great deal to be learned from the independent sector too. Many independent schools are of course fortunate to enjoy excellent facilities and beautiful campuses, but this is not the reason why staff retention in the independent sector is so good. In my experience, there are three key reasons, most of which could



be adopted by any school in the country, and at very little cost if they are granted a little more independence to set their own agendas.

First, independent schools place a strong emphasis on professional development. Typically, teachers will receive a very thorough induction programme, and, in many schools, opportunities are built into the weekly timetable for teachers to share best practice and engage in educational research or development. This fosters a highly professional spirit of mutual learning and support.

Second, independent schools adopt a wide and effective range of strategies to ensure their ethos is as strong as possible. Typically, high expectations of behaviour, involvement and effort are set from an early stage – before the pupils have even arrived at the school. The history of the school and the achievements of past pupils are showcased to generate pride for the school community, which generates aspiration and commitment. There is a strong emphasis on parental involvement to support each child individually. Often, specialist pastoral and academic staff are in place to ensure pupils receive individualised support. Independent schools are, typically, unafraid of a spirit of competitiveness which, if managed appropriately, can be highly motivating to pupils.

Third, it is my experience that independent schools specifically prioritise the wellbeing of their staff. A close eye is kept on workload and while professional standards are very high, most leadership teams are responsive to any pressures and difficulties experienced by staff.

That said, many maintained schools adopt many, all and more of these strategies very successfully indeed – these strategies are certainly not the exclusive domain of independent schools. These are simply an indication that both sectors can make a difference together and can absolutely learn from one another.



# How Assistive Technology is impacting learning in schools today

Head of Learning Support, Helena Warren, and Head of Computing, David Presky, at York House School, Hertfordshire, examine the effective use of assistive technology and how it can be empowering for all learners.



Actively participating in every day lessons at school can be difficult for some children, especially for those with learning difficulties. In particular, reading can be a struggle for pupils diagnosed with dyslexia, and in some cases, the simple act of listening to others and concentrating in class can be an even bigger challenge. The effective use of Assistive Technology (AT) in schools is, however, growing in recognition for supporting those children facing barriers linked to their neurodivergence. In fact, AT can be empowering for all learners, not just for children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) because it removes cognitive and physical barriers to learning and mobility – and elements of AT are already built into most devices as standard today, making it more intuitive.

AT includes software, devices and equipment that can help pupils to work around the learning challenges they are facing – whether that be dyslexia, autism or physical disabilities. If appropriate AT is carefully implemented for each specific need or disability, it could help to create a more level playing field for students across the board. Plus, with developments in the technology advancing rapidly, it is also becoming easier to use than ever before.

The power of AT in the classroom has been championed by committed educators for many years. However, developing these attributes as a mainstream and

standardised culture is progressing and appetite growing steadily. Used correctly, AT furnishes all pupils with the independence to access learning support, succeed in their academic studies on an even keel, and work in a learning environment that is more adaptive and inclusive for all. Teachers who embrace AT have also discovered that children who have used AT in the classroom, have significantly reduced their frustrations, anxiety and fears around learning.

The technology helps children to develop a clearer understanding of their capabilities, but in a way that celebrates difference and removes pre-conceived limitations to learning. This in turn helps to boost confidence as well as increase overall happiness and wellbeing, making learning in the classroom a more enjoyable experience.

As with any evolving technology, there could be challenges to the implementation, but access to quality IT support is vital in giving teachers the confidence in AT and its ability to achieve high level outcomes for pupils. With the right access to staff training, and the wealth of free online guidance that is available, teachers will need to have an open mind when it comes to the implementation of AT in schools.

For over a century, children have been expected to have handwritten work presented in books as a way to prove they are learning. The emphasis has very much been on that formal presentation and no

real consideration of the negative impact on children with, for example, Dyslexia. We are now in an age where the understanding of the positive impact of using AT is becoming more evident and embraced more frequently. The more teachers become familiar with pupils presenting their work in less traditional formats, the better, because those initial barriers will soon fade into the distance.

In the future, if we learn from the innovations, research and excellent practice of those who are committed to educating us all on the power of AT, we will have AT embedded into schools and in every lesson. Children will have the correct support using AT enabling them to learn independently and in ways that remove glass ceilings related to their learning. Children will be using voice to text tools freely, recording their work digitally by means of videos, texts or images. When this becomes normal practice in schools, an inclusive environment will be achieved whereby all children are reaching their optimum level.

It is essential that schools embrace a fully inclusive culture, one that supports and celebrates the wider community and the diverse world we live in. At York House we have adopted a range of AT as we believe it benefits all of our children. That said, it is essential that the most effective use of the technology is identified first – and that we seek to remove specific learning barriers on an individual basis. Some of our most impactful technologies include

image-based text, voice to text, text to voice, scanning pens and templates that structure the writing process. The use of voice to text has been a particularly effective tool to release the potential for learners who can strongly verbalise their ideas but struggle to share their thoughts with pen and paper.

Quite simply, these kinds of technologies have unleashed learning potential and have made a huge difference to those children who would have otherwise been limited by their disabilities and challenges. The independence and the success that AT can provide young people is something that has to be a priority in a world of true inclusivity.

It is likely that AT will change the lives of future generations, especially as access to it becomes increasingly mainstream. Today, many features are embedded within devices from blue chip technology providers such as Apple, Google and Microsoft. As these technologies evolve and improve, new opportunities will come to the fore. It is therefore vital that we equip our pupils with an independent growth mindset. We can't possibly know what future careers look like for our pupils or even what kind of digital lifestyles they may lead one day, so we must instil a culture of agility, adaptive evolution, and one that continually moves forward and strives to nurture pupils with the skills necessary for the 21st Century.



## Positivity from PAWS-itivity

Woodbridge School, Suffolk, has confirmed sponsorship of the PAWS-itivity Labrador sculpture 'Atticus' as part of a fundraising campaign to promote the positivity a library can bring.

The Suffolk Libraries campaign also aims to raise awareness of the work the charity does to help nurture

and support communities. PAWS-itivity will see over 40 Labrador dog sculptures, which have been individually created by local artists exhibited in libraries throughout the summer.

Woodbridge School's Labrador has been created by Sharon Teague, a local graphic designer and artist,

and is based on the Anthony Horowitz book 'Maggie Murders' in which the school features. All Labradors will then be sold at an evening auction in the autumn, with funds raised helping to deliver a range of support offered by Suffolk Libraries including nurturing literacy as well as improving health and wellbeing.

Pictured: PAWS-itivity sculpture Atticus with Woodbridge School Assistance dog Barney and Head of Woodbridge School Prep, Nicola Mitchell

# An Earth Centre vision of education



The Earth Centre Manager at Kingsley School, Devon, Jack Harty, explains how the school is working towards developing a curriculum and culture centred around sustainability, ecology, and environmentalism that are "enriching and empowering, not tokenistic".

"In 2019 the 'Earth Centre' concept was conceived, and so began our work toward bringing sustainability, ecology, and environmentalism into the heart of everything that goes on at school. This has permeated into both the culture that we seek to instil within the school and the curriculums that we design and deploy. All of which have the aim of 'future proofing' students so that they are prepared for whatever the future may hold for them.

## Learning at the heart

The first corner stone of our approach is that anything that is done at school in respect to the environment or sustainability puts learning in the forefront. At a student level this means the knowledge and/or skills that they learn are grounded in context and relevance, removing the abstract and detached nature education often takes.

The wheel does not need to be reinvented. Throughout the prep and senior school there are many examples of sustainability, ecology and environmentalism being taught. Within the prep there is a strong core of forest schools which is both knowledge and skills rich, giving students an initial exposure to the world outside their classrooms and opportunities they might not otherwise have. Within the classroom there is an environmental studies provision

across all age groups where more knowledge is acquired about their world and associated issues. In the senior school we have gone through schemes of work and highlighted where there are elements of the Earth Centre principles already, so that teachers feel empowered to make those holistic links across topics and subjects, increasing the relevance of their subjects. And where possible drawing subjects out of their classrooms and into the school estate to use the buildings, grounds, and ecology zone as a resource to enhance the provision of skills within the curricula.

That being said, we are keen to reinvigorate and revolutionise what provision we have and so are designing new curricula. Currently focusing on KS3&4 we are writing a diploma in sustainability studies which focuses on the Earth Centre principles for years 7-9. This will give students joining and moving into the senior school bespoke lessons focusing on the issues at hand. The setting of the diploma is both in the classroom and outside in the ecology zone and surrounding biosphere; building their knowledge and skills base whilst immersing them within the environment and outdoor learning. For years 10 and 11 we have chosen new courses that allow students to continue their journey along Earth Centre courses. A priority

was to ensure that they were both relevant to our students and the future they might inhabit whilst making sure they were accessible for a range of learners. We settled on a BTEC in Land-based studies for a more practical side of things and a combination of an iGCSE in Environmental Management and an ASDAN focusing on the environment for a more knowledge-based approach. With the integration of the ASDAN we have been able to interweave practical elements focused on the environmental management of our own school grounds through carbon footprint calculations and biodiversity investigation guaranteeing that there is not a deficit of skills being taught.

## Not a tokenistic exercise

Throughout this review and course development, it is important that it is not tokenistic. We do not do this so that we can say that we do but so that students become empowered, enlightening change makers ready to take on the world. The key principle is that there is a learning outcome to anything that happens at school. Regardless of what level the project, decision or action is made there needs to be an ability for our students to learn about why that decision might be made, or what the benefit of it is. This means that we increase the exposure of students to decision making and problem solving which not only benefits them as critical thinkers but also empowers them and makes them feel valued so that education and schooling is done with them not to them.

## Science, Research and Industry Led

To support this approach and to ensure that the actions taken, or curriculum deployed do not simply serve as a tick box exercise, our approach has been centred around research and science, whilst working closely with industry and the job market to understand what might be required of our students when they progress out of our sphere

of influence and into the wider world both in terms of skills and knowledge.

Our initial grounding in science for our curriculum and culture was around the development of our 'no-dig' regenerative permaculture ecology zone. Working closely with Christopher Upton the co-founder of 'Zerodig', we took carbon, organic matter, and other soil baseline measurements of the then rugby pitch before converting it into the functioning market garden it is today. This has allowed our ecology zone to serve as many curriculum and cultural artifacts; with the monitoring of soil conditions, carbon content, nutrient density of food, knowledge of where food serving our canteen has come from and that is before we consider the biodiversity side of permaculture. All of this has provided many of our curriculums with an active place where knowledge learnt in the classroom can be applied and seen in a real-world setting, transforming that information into powerful, actionable knowledge in our students' hands. Coupled with this is the culture that comes from knowing what is in season, how to responsibly manage land and cultivation, and the impact this has on soil health and carbon. This year this concept of scientific grounding has also been expanded with the measuring and monitoring of the school's carbon footprint, becoming a curriculum artifact for many subjects. Alongside this the management of the school grounds ecology and biodiversity and buildings are also being utilised to facilitate discussion and act as a backdrop for students to explore their understanding of sustainability, ecology, and environmentalism.

As well as grounding our approach in science and research we are also aware that understanding where a student could end up is crucial to support their journey in getting there. For that reason, we have met and continue to meet with key players in 'Green' industries and sustainability leads from companies





to understand what skills they look for within employees or wished they possessed. This has allowed us to make sure that the curricula put in place have skills interwoven that are sought after, but also that there is exposure to the vast array of jobs that are out there for our students to see and to aspire to.

### Student centred

We are putting environmental, sustainable, and ecology-based education in the forefront of our approach but in front of that sits our students. We believe that they are future leaders and change makers, and we need to make them feel like they can make a

change and believe that the future is going to be there for them to do so. They are far more clued into what is going on in the world around them than we know and are regularly bombarded with fatalistic outcomes. We need to encourage them to believe. To believe that we can overcome the challenges we are facing. To believe that the future is worth fighting for and is yet to be written. To believe that it is achievable and to equip them with knowledge and skills to achieve it.

If we are truly to make change and alter the path that our world is taking, then it is a no-brainer that this comes from our children. As cheesy as it sounds, it is true now more than ever, children are the future of society; and society is currently dictating the future of the world. We need to empower our young people so that they feel they can make changes big or small and they feel confident in doing so. And we believe that starts now, in school; through access to powerful knowledge and skills, modelling culture and decision making, and setting the right environment for them to thrive."



\* Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network [www.asdan.org.uk](http://www.asdan.org.uk)

## Teacher announced as 'RHS School Gardening Champion of the Year 2023'



Every year, the Royal Horticultural Society competition receives hundreds of entries and is judged by a panel of RHS ambassadors, including TV presenter and horticulturalist Frances Tophill. Felicity Sturge, teacher at Guildford High School, Surrey, was rewarded by the RHS panel for her commitment and outreach work with other schools, encouraging members of the West Surrey Partnership to visit and enjoy the learning and wellbeing benefits of the Guildford High School plot.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) judging panel said: "What impressed us most about Felicity was her commitment, as we know it is not easy to find the time to run a gardening programme alongside teaching responsibilities. What she has achieved within a two-year period is incredible. We liked how she was working with other members of school staff to realise her vision, because this also means the garden has longevity. The judging panel were wowed

by the local outreach network Felicity has created – it is one thing to have a school garden, but it's quite another to build relationships with other schools so that more children can access the space. Her engagement of sixth form aged students is also of merit, as typically we see gardening has a higher take up among primary school aged children."

In 2021, Felicity transformed a weedy, disused area of school grounds into the now blossoming school garden and allotment. Felicity started by offering a gardening course to Sixth Form students. The rest of the school then followed with experiential learning sessions focussed on nature, sustainability, and food provenance, designed to inspire curiosity in nature. Felicity regularly reaches out to visitors from The West Surrey Partnership, a cross phase, cross sector partnership of 29 schools in Surrey. Three of the closest partner schools visit the garden weekly to get their hands muddy, learn and have fun!



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# Championing student voice to reshape the curriculum

What to do when we come across gender inequalities or discrimination?

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator at ACS International Schools, Lauren Kelley, discusses how championing the student voice has led to a review of school curriculum and is driving positive change and informing best practice.



In recent months, many young people have been exposed to stories on social media around sexism and female safety, much of this fuelled by the virality of misogynist influencer Andrew Tate. Charities and counter-extremism organisations have noticed a recent rapid rise in the number of cases being referred to them by schools, however, many students haven't felt comfortable speaking out about incidents.

At ACS International School Egham, a school that is part of ACS International Schools, a group of schools with a vibrant international, diverse and multi-cultural ethos, students have been proactive in reaching out to us to communicate their concerns. The student voice

is championed at the school – the students themselves being the ones who have driven the need for change.

Following the tragic death of George Floyd in America in 2020, we established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Council to respond to our students' concerns across ACS International Schools and to raise awareness of the key issues impacting them. The Council consists of 30 volunteer members of staff, and aims to drive positive change, as well as provide recommendations on best practice.

## Let Girls Play

When we began to see an overall drop in female student participation in sport at ACS Egham, female students told us via an anonymous

survey that they felt more comfortable playing sports when no boys were present – mainly due to a rise in misogynistic attitudes. Tackling this straightaway, we signed up for Barclays and the FA's Let Girls Play; the largest all-girls football session to take place nationwide, giving girls equal access to football at school. Two hundred female and gender diverse students were invited to take part, and female coaches from football academies led the sessions in our sports hall alongside other sports, which resulted in a powerful sense of camaraderie and inclusion.

## Let Boys Talk

On the same day as Let Girls Play, our Head of School and other male members of staff led Let Boys Talk sessions with all male-identifying students to encourage them to reflect on and openly discuss gender equality. The sessions encouraged students to discuss their feelings and the common masculine stereotypes they face in today's society, the difference in the roles that boys and girls play, and what it means to be male. These workshops signalled the start of an entire review of our school curriculum, where we are considering how to address crucial questions such as, what to do when we come across gender inequalities or discrimination.

## Fighting misogyny

We have also worked with gender equality organisation, Action Breaks Silence to deliver dedicated workshops to our Grade 8 students (aged 13–14) as part of our PSHE curriculum. The sessions aimed to raise awareness of gender-based violence and misogyny, ensuring that we are taking responsibility and actively encouraging a more open and equitable school community. The female workshops in particular focussed on female empowerment through self-defence. The sessions equipped all students with the tools to tackle hate, as well as understand the damaging and detrimental impact

of this ideology. Next, we plan to provide professional development and support for our staff.

## Celebrating Pride

Also this year, our LGBTQI+ network successfully secured places for ACS staff members to march at the London Pride parade in the summer, sending the message that we celebrate all members of our community and see power in diversity. While only staff are able to attend London Pride due to safeguarding issues, we still wanted to include our students – and so we've launched a contest for students to redesign our standard school logo to reflect Pride, which will be put on the banner that our staff will carry at the parade.

We have invited students to drive the Pride Month celebrations in our staff planning meetings and those students who formed the LGBTQIA+ and social justice groups at ACS Egham were so pleased to be involved. By going to students directly – asking them what they would like to be taught during this time, what is most important to them, and which resources were most helpful for them when learning about LGBTQI+ issues – we are giving students a say because ultimately, these are important issues that we want to get right.

Next year, the Council will implement a DEI Student Specialist program which will see us collaborating with DEI partner organisations to train a group of students to tackle discrimination. All of this simply marks the beginning of our DEI journey. As we open the dialogue between staff and students in order to better understand student experiences and take action, we are continuing to learn that we should, at times, look to our students to nurture a sense of openness and drive the agenda in these complex and current issues.

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# Saying goodbye to our leavers

It's the time of year for farewells. Head of Sixth Form from King's High School, Warwick, Celia Tedd, reflects on what can be one of the hardest aspects of the job, and the importance of giving young people the chance to have a proper goodbye.



When people talk about the hardest aspects of being a secondary school teacher, thoughts turn to piles of marking, reports deadlines and the constant shadow of exams, not to mention our recent and sudden mastery of online learning in the midst of a pandemic. Every year, however, something far more basic and human takes centre stage. For many of us, particularly those on the pastoral side of education, bidding farewell to a generation of pupils is both the hardest, and most inevitable, aspect of this job.

Every summer I feel a pang of loss as we say goodbye to another wave of pupils leaving school for the final time. Over the years we have invested so much in every aspect of their education. Got to know them and their families and helped them navigate the joys and sorrows of their teenage years. Guided them through decisions that will define their adult lives. They in turn have brought us laughter, young wisdom and frustration in differing

proportions. Those ties are cut abruptly one day in July, and we wish them well on the next stage of their adventure.

At the formal leavers' events, we smile for the camera as every possible combination of pupils huddle together for final snapshots. It's like being at a big family wedding. Will those 25 pupils ever again be in the same place at the same time? Will they remember one another's names when the photo surfaces in several years and they shriek at their haircuts and how fresh-faced they all look? In those final moments they want to capture and commemorate every highlight of these important years, and to stamp themselves up on the school. Despite all the promises of postcards of youthful dream destinations of the moment, you know this bunch will be gone for good any moment. Their promises to keep in touch offer a way of not quite saying goodbye and not quite severing those ties. The postcards won't come, though

the occasional sheepish reference request might.

It is important that we give young people a chance to say their goodbyes at school properly, with celebration of this huge milestone plus moments for individual as well as collective farewells. The departing pupils need to understand from our goodbyes that we are proud of them, and that our good wishes for their future are not proportional to their individual successes or misdemeanours. Saying goodbye also reminds us about the nature of the teacher-pupil relationship. We are not parents. We are certainly not friends. We occupy a space that comes with responsibility, intensity and care, and that space is fundamental but temporary. As teachers, we have been secondary attachment figures for those pupils. Their excitement at leaving school, and indeed us, can therefore also mask apprehension, confusion and fear, particularly for those whose attachment style is not secure. Many

won't want fuss, but saying goodbye is emotionally healthy and provides a sense of closure.

The truth is that despite the annual surge of empty classroom syndrome and the postcard pledges, we secondary school teachers don't want the pupils to keep in close touch. We know that our promises to those young people have been fulfilled when they turn to face the future and head off without a backwards glance. We want them to be full of confidence and wonder, their young lives loaded with potential and possibility. There will be wobbles along the way for them, as there are for any adult, but they will be negotiating those wobbles without us yet with our words ringing in their ears. Everything we have taught them and introduced them to has knitted together into a pathway that leads irreversibly out of school, and so we bid them a fond farewell on that one-way journey.



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## Facing setbacks – how to help pupils become more resilient

This year's Year 6 reading SATs were condemned by some teachers as being 'too hard'. Some pupils were said to be reduced to tears. Rather than taking to social media to complain, or just reaching for the tissues, would it be more helpful to use experiences like these to reflect on how children can be prepared to face such setbacks with resilience? Their future lives are unlikely to be without challenges.

### Head of Northampton High School GDST, Northamptonshire, Dr May Lee:



"Teaching children bravery and resilience is crucial for their development, extending

beyond the pursuit of perfection. Embracing bravery allows them to acknowledge and accept imperfections, leading to increased happiness and success. The recent controversy surrounding the Year 6 reading SATs, where some pupils were reportedly reduced to tears due to the difficulty level, highlights the necessity of equipping

children with skills to navigate and overcome setbacks. Instead of merely complaining or seeking comfort, it is essential to utilise such experiences as opportunities for reflection and growth.

Examinations like the Year 6 SATs are just one example of the challenges children will face in life. They will encounter setbacks and obstacles in various forms, such as disappointing grades, negative feedback, career changes, and family conflicts. By prioritising academic buoyancy and resilience over perfection,

children learn the value of effort, perseverance, and problem-solving. The cultivation of bravery and the embracement of failure must, therefore, assume a prominent position within the education movement, knowing that it is a stepping stone towards personal growth.

When children confront challenging situations, it becomes vital to guide them in analysing what went wrong, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, and developing strategies for improvement. This

process nurtures self-reflection, critical thinking, and adaptability, essential skills for success in any endeavour. It also empowers them to take risks, explore new opportunities, and learn from their mistakes with confidence. These qualities provide children with the mindset and skills to face challenges head-on, contribute meaningfully, and thrive in an ever-changing world. By fostering bravery and resilience in schools, we enable our students to reach their full potential and define success on their own terms."

### Head of Brentwood Preparatory School, Essex, Jason Whiskerd:



"In 2003, the football manager, Iain Dowie, coined the term 'bouncebackability' which was formally

defined as 'the capacity to recover quickly from a setback'. Whilst Dowie was talking about Crystal Palace FC at the time, it struck a chord well beyond football circles.

Fast forward 20 years, and the phrase has entered the lexicon

of language and can be used to describe the need for pupils to move on quickly from disappointment around exams and, in this case, the perceived difficulty of the recent English SATs.

Disappointment is not a new phenomenon for school aged children and neither is the notion of blaming others for a struggle in tests – examiners, teachers, warm weather and feng shui of a room have all been blamed at various

times, as have many other factors.

Schools have realised that resilient learners are often the most successful and that failure can be part of long term success. It is important to take risks on a learning journey and where there is risk, there is the danger of failing.

The best schools 'bake in' opportunities for children to succeed and fail (not come first)

in almost equal measure. There are opportunities to develop both aspects, in and out of the classroom and Dweck's mantra of Growth Mindset is built on the premise that we are all resilient but need to find a way to use it for self-improvement.

Don't worry too much about under performing in tests – just bounce back and learn to do better next time."

### Head of Reigate Grammar School, Surrey, Shaun Fenton:



"As Headmaster, I believe we need to cherish and protect children during childhood, their most

formative years, but also prepare them for later life.

However, assessments should be designed so the children feel

safe and able to show their best learning. Exams are inherently stressful enough and should be designed so that they do not leave children in tears or trauma.

Of course, the wider journey through school should be an adventure, where children learn about themselves and the world, and grow qualities of character

and resilience. This can be in challenging academic study, in outdoor adventures, via volunteering in the community, through sport, the arts, debating and public speaking and the other many ingredients of a great education beyond the classroom. Children benefit from our support to develop their ability to adapt

and overcome the challenges they face – so they can face the wider world with confidence and competence.

This is all about getting the right balance and having the motivation to support the children's personal growth in a holistic and loving way – so that they become their best self."

### Head of Norwich High School for Girls, GDST, Norfolk, Alison Sefton:



"Setbacks are an integral part of the learning process, and the journey towards

resilience involves reframing them as opportunities for growth. Through open communication and a shared understanding between parents and schools, students can

be encouraged to view mistakes not as failures, but as stepping stones toward personal and academic progress. By promoting a growth mindset, where setbacks

are seen as temporary setbacks rather than insurmountable obstacles, children develop resilience as they persist in the face of challenges."





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# Wellbeing: Culture not Classroom

"Wellbeing should not be reduced to a timetabled lesson", it "should evolve into creating a culture that becomes the embodiment of a whole school". Head of Beech Lodge School, Berkshire, Dan Gillespie, provides five ideas for creating a culture of wellbeing at school.

"The discussion of wellbeing is arguably the most important concern for any of us as educators. The ISI new framework leaves us in no doubt as to the importance of this phrase and the new directives ensure that it can never stray far from the mind of an effective educational leadership team. However, if we are to be reflective of its importance to our performance and responsibility, then what does it actually mean?

Wellbeing is defined in the Oxford English dictionary as the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy including physical, psychological, or moral welfare.

As professionals with a huge responsibility across all areas of education, we need to ensure that the encompassing task of wellbeing evolves into creating a culture that becomes the embodiment of our whole school. We also need to create a culture that ensures that we help pupils manage their own wellbeing into adult life.

Over the last 10 years, Beech Lodge School has set about creating an immersive culture of wellbeing and it's had a hugely positive impact on

our pupils, some of whom are the most marginalised children in our society. There are just 5 things that we believe has helped us to do this.

## 1. A sense of belonging

Wellbeing needs to become the fabric of the school, embedded in every lesson, activity, and room, from artwork to atmosphere. School needs to be an inviting place to be and the pupils need to feel that they belong and are valued. We have worked hard to make the school warm and nurturing where all staff and pupils show genuine affection and respect towards one another. Every success, no matter how minor, is celebrated and every child is shown they are valued every single day.

One of our teachers, Stef Pearce, has written a thesis focusing on the educational perspectives of children and their sense of belonging. In it she explores how these relationships; especially with school, teachers, peers and even themselves are at the heart of children being able to spark learning. She uncovers that school culture, therapeutic approaches, unconditional positive regard as well as the physical environment, all

align to benefit children and indeed benefit all children regardless of upbringing.

## 2. The Staff

We know that for a child to learn, to achieve and to thrive, they must be in a state of readiness and to have their basic needs met. They must feel valued, they must believe in themselves and have positive role models around them. Therefore, investment in the wellbeing of staff, parents and carers is hugely valuable in shaping an environment for success for all. In fact, there is no greater impact on wellbeing than the actual staff themselves. Staff are a school's most valuable resource.

As children learn by what they see and feel, rather than what they are told, even the most engaging, carefully resourced lessons are no match for the positive role modelling of the behaviour we wish to promote. As we all know teaching happens everywhere.

Teachers take the time to get to know the pupils and develop good relationships and then use a range of appropriate strategies and initiatives in the classroom to help scaffold this. Employ people who not only enjoy teaching but are fully engaged in their own teaching and learning.

## 3. Environment

It is no surprise that physical surroundings are important and that school should be an environment that reinforces all aspects of wellbeing. This includes outside spaces, communal spaces for staff and pupils to come together, as well as quiet zones and thinking areas. We have built areas which have been designed to allow for varied learning with movement encouraging a change in perspective.

Children should also be proud of their environment. Our founder, Daniela Shanly, therefore determined that creative touches like a '50's style American Diner, and a library that looks like a Granny's living room, as well as a hat stand full of crazy head pieces, were implemented and all add to the inner workings of the school. This creative interpretation and decoration make the school a happy place to be.

School walls are also drenched with children's art reflecting the ethos of



Dan Gillespie

the school, celebrating our children as well as ensuring a bright and immersive environment.

## 4. Safety and Support

To thrive, children need to feel safe and supported inside school. We use the mantra of "Every day is a new day" to reinforce that everyone can make mistakes but we learn and move on from them. We have a no blame culture with unconditional positive regard and the use of therapeutic approaches to develop confidence and boost self-esteem.

Staff are trained to use their understanding of 'behaviour as communication' and support children compassionately and consistently. Importantly, they convey authority which is wholly compatible with our relational approach to children. It allows clear thinking, effective teaching and a thoughtful response to children's needs.

We have regular check-ins, and every pupil has a key adult - a staff member who is available to talk to as well as additional support networks.

## 5. Working with families and carers as a community

An important part of our community is our parents and carers so we work closely with our families to improve outcomes and ensure wellbeing for them as well as for their children.

Alongside the usual reports, parents evenings, weekly newsletters and individual discourse, we work hard to show our families and support network that they are valued. We keep parents fully informed about learning and personal development and they are also encouraged to engage with us in a meaningful way.

We run workshops and therapeutic based courses for parents/carers to develop their own skills and help them to be strong positive role models for their children. We have regular parent coffee mornings and social events and they all know that they have the leadership team on hand to discuss any concerns they have about their children or even themselves.

## Mental Health Awareness Week

Ursuline Preparatory School, Essex, embraced Mental Health Awareness Week by giving each class the opportunity to attend a mental health workshop.

The objective of the workshops was to inform the children about how to support their own mental health

using videos, class interactions and role plays. The children were also taught about how to notice the signs in not only themselves, but also in others around them, that may indicate suffering with mental health issues. This enables them to be able to offer support to others as well as help themselves.

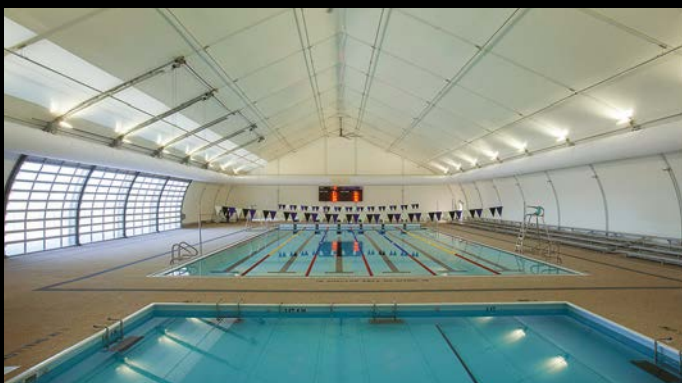


Pictured: National Mental Health Awareness Week Workshop in progress





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# School uniform – making the change

Barnard Castle School, County Durham, discuss how they have gone about changing their uniform, the reasons behind it, how they chose a supplier, the importance of involving pupils and parents in the process and how it's been received.

As Barnard Castle School continues to help prepare its students for the world beyond 'Barney', as it is affectionately known, a significant part of that is pupils understanding that how they look and present themselves makes an impression; one that can have a long-lasting impact.

With all this in mind, the wider context of the pandemic accelerated the decision to make a change of course in the summer of 2020, upon the conclusion of the School's longstanding contract with a local supplier.

Added to this, the wearing of sportswear for the 2020/2021 academic year, owing to the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time, meant that parents had not recently purchased any of the old uniform, providing the perfect opportunity to review and amend the uniform.

"It was the view of many pre-COVID, that whilst our Sixth Form in

their suits, looked professional and smart, our attire up to that point did not generate the same sentiments, either by observers or by the children wearing them," explains Tony Jackson, Headmaster of Barnard Castle School.

"Additionally, we felt the price paid for the old uniform did not represent good value for money, and as such, parents were shopping elsewhere for cheaper alternatives, which created a mismatch of colours and quality."

After a relatively short selection process, an independent school uniform and sportswear supplier was chosen as Barney's designer – for a variety of reasons, namely the professionalism of their operation, the online support and delivery, the stitching of name labels and their commitment to sustainability.

"They understood the wide variety of backgrounds of our pupils, with a combination of rural and urban, local and international, big and small. They understood our purpose

and our DNA, and recognised the importance of a uniform, which embodies this. Our traditional yet forward-thinking approach to life, reflecting how we want our children to be confident yet humble; aspirational but not pompous."

A series of designs were produced and later approved by the School's Senior Management Team, before focus groups with parents and current students took place – a crucial element of the process. Final tweaks were made, following the consultations, and the final product was shared internally with the teaching staff.

Fast-forward a year to June 2021; the uniform was readily available for parents to purchase ahead of the new School year, one without any pandemic-related restrictions in place as the country bounced back from COVID-19.

"We want our children to be proud to call themselves Barnardians, and we wanted a uniform to



Barnard Castle pupils in the new uniform

reflect this. We strongly believe our designers delivered on this brief, as we emerged from the pandemic a stronger Barney," Jackson concluded.

Following the successful rollout of the new Barney uniform from September 2021, the School has since engaged the same designer to produce a similarly striking attire for the Sixth Form, one that presents students as employable and delivers a good impression from the offset.

"In every aspect of Sixth Form, we expect the students, as young adults, to uphold a professionalism in everything they do," Fe Beadnell, Deputy Head (i/c Sixth Form), added.

"This not only relates to role-modelling for the younger years, but also how appearance epitomises the upstanding individuals they are."

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# In challenging times, it's more important than ever to reach out to your peers

Director of Marketing, Admissions and Development, St Albans High School for Girls and Board Director of AMCIS, Claire Schofield reports on the AMCIS 2023 Annual Conference.



'Hubbub' seems a good candidate for a collective noun for a group of marketing, communications and admissions professionals. There's no official term (according to Google) so taking inspiration from the buzz of a record 300 plus delegates at the AMCIS 2023 Annual Conference seems a good place to start.

So, what were the talking points of the AMCIS conference this year? In short, looking to the future – the future of the independent school sector in uncertain times, the impact of technology and our own futures as we focused on our professional development.

Covid cast a shadow over the 2022 AMCIS conference. The theme for many, last year, was how to capitalise on all we'd learned from a breakneck pivot to a virtual life to equip our schools for what would come next. One year on and the question of 'what next?' has a clear answer in the economic and political headwinds facing our sector. In challenging times, it might be tempting to get your head down in your office and narrow your focus, but it's more

important than ever to reach out to your peers for support, ideas, learning – and to recognise and celebrate achievement – and that's where AMCIS comes in.

Kicking off the conference, David Milner, Chair of AMCIS, set the tone for the coming two days in his welcome speech, summing up AMCIS as a community supporting each other in the best interests of our schools and making the point that effective admissions and marketing teams are an essential ingredient in keeping school doors open. Conference delegates enthusiastically took up the mission to learn from each other, share best practice and support one another to face the next set of challenges.

Admissions, marketing and communications in independent schools has always benefited from people who bring a wealth of experience from other sectors to their school roles. The past couple of years has seen record levels of job openings in schools, and the many new faces at the conference reflected that. Getting out of the day-to-day and networking with

peers is one of the greatest benefits of a professional conference. It's even more valuable when you are finding your feet in a new role and a new sector. The beauty of the AMCIS 'hubbub' is that we all learn from one another – the newcomer's life and professional experience brings as many valuable insights as that of the 'old timers', and the in-betweeners.

Opening the conference, marketing expert, Karen Connell, took up the theme of 'you can't do it alone', sharing how brands have the most impact when the entire organisation 'gets it'. Wince-inducing examples from big name brands of the pitfalls of a disconnect between what we say and what we do gave a compelling incentive to think deeply about how schools can make everyone a brand ambassador. Watch this space for your next weekly Briefing, all staff InSET and much more!

As well as being inspired to revisit how we engage our human colleagues in our schools' marketing and admissions, we were also challenged to think about the

implications of artificial intelligence for the sector.

Matt Thomas, digital content entrepreneur, was met by knowing nods when he pointed out the good intentions of the conference goer who gets back to school with a pocketful of bright ideas... and manages to implement precisely none of them because the everyday to-do list takes over. Could AI be a solution? But how do you navigate the landscape of 1000s of new AI products every month to find the ones that work for you and your school? Matt gave delegates inspiration and some practical starting points. The 2024 AMCIS conference will surely see more on AI – and no doubt some school case studies from the platform. The theme continued across several other sessions, with the comment from 15th Media – that AI won't replace you but 'people who know how to use it will' – providing a pretty compelling reason to follow through on those conference take-homes!



## Visit from former royal dressmaker

Forres Sandle Manor School, Hampshire, has welcomed Maureen Rose, the former dressmaker to Queen Elizabeth II to the school.

Maureen spoke to children about her time as dressmaker to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, giving firsthand accounts of royal dress fittings and the meticulous attention to detail that went into

creating stunning garments fit for a queen.

She also shared anecdotes about the Queen's beloved corgis, painting a vivid picture of life behind the palace walls.

Maureen reminded the children that anything is possible with determination, skill, and a passion for one's craft.

## Nursing Practice Award

Claire Ashworth, the Nurse Manager at Stonyhurst, Lancashire, has been awarded the Chief Nursing Officer Gold Award by NHS England for going above and beyond, demonstrating safeguarding excellence for tenacity around information sharing and Child Protection – Information Sharing (CP-IS).

The award was presented to Claire at Stonyhurst by Professor Catherine Randall, Associate Director for National Safeguarding for the NHS.

Claire was appointed Nurse Manager at Stonyhurst in 2019 and has since established much improved links with multiagency organisations, with the aim of putting in place the necessary data sharing protocols and IT systems allowing national safeguarding and

health information to be shared with the Stonyhurst Health & Wellbeing team.

The Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) Award has been developed to reward the significant and outstanding contributions made by nurses in England and their exceptional contributions to nursing practice.





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

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# Canopy options for Education – why they're a must-have

In recent years there has been a significant push for canopies and outside covered shelters in educational spaces. Outdoor learning has become prominent in achieving better grades and students gain greater lesson engagement. With many different requirements highlighted by schools and universities across the UK, Fordingbridge have developed their core design concepts to envelop the ethos and approach to different circumstances and specifications, here are just a few examples of the impacts their canopies have made to better the welfare of pupils and teachers:



## Arthur Mellows Village College – Timber Courtyard Canopy

As one of many installations Fordingbridge have constructed at Arthur Mellows, this free-standing canopy was designed to shelter students as they transition between classes and as a place sought for shelter come rain or shine. At such a large scale, Fordingbridge have the expertise and know-how to install such canopies when time is of the essence. The significance of height and width shows consideration for access of fire services to the main building, should it ever be required. This foresight and planning is a great example of how Fordingbridge's experience can make a difference to your project.



## St Georges School – Enclosed Sustainable Building

Catering to their expanding student base, St Georges School is now home to a fully insulated classroom designed with underfloor heating for comfort throughout the colder months. This 255m<sup>2</sup> build was developed as a graceful transformation enhanced by the surrounding wide-open views across the school's land, which is now a dedicated space for intimate learning as contribution to such success of student studies and the development of pupil's education. With sustainably sourced timber arches and cladding, this building maximises viewing and lighting of the fields with a heightened front to enhance vistas, making this structure a fun and dynamic learning space.



## Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School – Steel MUGA Canopy

To weather protect physical education lessons, and outdoor dining at break and lunchtimes, Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School contracted Fordingbridge to develop their outdoor unprotected space into an area with full use and purpose year-round. Height and design considerations were met for the requirements of sports play and outside education when catering to the increasing pupil population at this thriving school. P.E lessons can now be taken to the outdoors no matter the weather, thanks to this waterproofed solution to their sports court.



## Montsaye Academy – Triple Conic Tensile Canopy

Montsaye Academy's triple conic is located outside their canteen and kitchens, for students to take food outside for comfortable alfresco dining whilst admiring the panoramic views of the football field and beyond. With considerations for size, style, and colour, the canopy compliments the surrounding hardscapes allowing this structure to blend with the ethos, brand, and careful approach of the school, covering a generous 144m<sup>2</sup> granting space to cater for break and lunchtime shelter should the need arise when the heavens open for rainfall, or when the sun shines.

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# The VAT on school fees ‘hot potato’

Educationalist Andrew McEwen, discusses the issue of VAT on school fees, and wonders if fears are overstated...



The Labour party's relaunch of a policy to apply VAT to tuition fees in independent schools, should it be elected in the next UK election, has raised some concern in the sector. Such policy proposals are not new, having been floated a number of times by the party. I suspect that the fears expressed by some, regarding such a policy may have been over-stated.

First of all, the next General Election may be a long time coming. If 'a week is a long time in politics' then more than nineteen months is an eternity (the next election has to be called for 25 January 2025, at the latest). Much can happen in that time.

Secondly, in order for Labour to win an outright majority they would need to gain around 130 seats, not an easy task. Should there be some sort of coalition government with Labour as main party then all policies will be subject to a great deal of scrutiny, and legislation will probably be presented in the order of least contention.

In any case, should Labour win an outright majority, then the order in which it would present legislation may well see 'VAT on School Fees' somewhat down the line.

The next pitfall is in implementation. Recent parliaments have been quite chaotic when it comes to the implementation of primary legislation – take the legislation to transport illegal migrants to Rwanda for processing as a key example. How many have actually been transported? There have been numerous legal actions taken to prevent such implementation. Who is to say what action

might be taken to delay the implementation of applying VAT to tuition fees? Not least there will likely be substantial time spent in deciding what part of the fees is specifically for tuition. This has been well analysed in a recent ISC report. Schools could easily breakdown their charges to distinguish between tuition, breaktime and lunchtime supervision (welfare), sporting activities and the like. It would be difficult for a government to force the application of VAT on 'welfare' and sport.

We then come to the consequence of VAT registration. It is inevitable that schools would exceed the threshold for registration and so would have to complete the registration process. If a school became VAT registered then it would be able to claim back the VAT component on its purchases and expenses, not least, maintenance, repair and construction. There would likely be attempts to obtain retroactive claims on building work, especially where this has been funded by loans as repayments, which would include the VAT component, and may well be ongoing post-registration. This is likely to be fought over. And, of course, there is no certainty that a 20% VAT rate would be applied from day one. In order to 'cushion the blow', there may well be an initial compromise rate of, say, 10%?

ISC made a calculation that the net impact of a VAT rate of 20% would be around 15%. I estimate that the net impact of a 10% rate would be around 5%. This would reduce further with a fractioning of the overall invoicing.

Alongside these considerations is

the issue of whether a VAT charge would be added to other provision. For example, there are Language Schools, sports training courses, and not least, private tuition centres, especially those which focus on preparing state school pupils for Grammar School entry exams.

And why would a Labour government introduce such a policy? Are the reasons ideological or economic? The net revenue generated is not that significant, so behind any action must be ideology. There is a belief that privilege in terms of being able to pay for a private education has to be predicated on the belief that a private education is 'better' than a state education. If outcomes, in terms of academic results, are the key performance indicator then there is certainly some evidence to support this. The 'Free School' initiative was implemented by Michael Gove to counterbalance this. However, it appears that that initiative has stalled following its first four years with the 2015 Conservative government designating all new Academy schools as Free Schools in part to keep up numbers.

"Equality of opportunity", "levelling up" and such mantras have been used by all political parties, but there has been little evidence in the education sector of radical action in recent years. If the implementation of VAT on school fees were to be introduced as radical policy, then there are other actions that the current government could take to show some radical credentials.

Earlier, I mentioned the tuition centres, which primarily prepare children for Grammar school entry

exams. I recall that, many years ago when I was a pupil at primary school, I and all my classmates took the eleven plus. We were prepared for the exams in class by our teachers and the make up my Grammar school cohort was primarily state educated – at least among the Day pupils. As far as I know, it is no longer the case that state primary schools, where there are state – funded Grammar schools, routinely prepare their pupils for entrance exams. This is why parents resort to paying for private tuition. In contrast, private Prep schools in such areas do prepare their pupils for the exams and this is often their main selling point with parents seeking to improve their chance of having their children enter a Grammar school.

If equality of opportunity is a main reason for putting pressure on independent schools, then surely the Labour party should be pressing for state primary schools to prepare pupils for state Grammar entrance exams. Failing this, the current government should be using its considerable majority to pre-empt the Labour party and introduce secondary legislation to mandate, under Ofsted, such a policy.

So, taken all together, there would be numerous pitfalls in implementing a policy to have VAT added to independent school fees, and much that the independent sector could do to mitigate any net financial impact. Equally, there are actions which could be taken to further levelling-up policies – a new challenge perhaps for Mr Gove?

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

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# Maximising Pupil Progress

## – What are the keys to success?

Teachers and education leaders from across sectors gathered together at Downe House, Berkshire for a conference themed on Maximising Pupil Progress. The aim of the day was to share ideas and experiences to understand what more can be done to support pupils from both independent and state sectors.

Following a welcome and introductions from Downe House Head, Emma McKendrick and Deputy Head Matthew Godfrey, keynote speeches were made by Minister of State for Schools The Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP and Headmistress of Wembley's Michaela Community School, Katharine Birbalsingh.

The Minister of State reflected on his years within the Ministry of Education and spoke about the impact the Covid lockdown has had on pupil progress and child mental health, highlighting that

school life is still far from normal in many parts of the country. Also commenting on the Government's vision for continued improvement in education, he explained how the recent emphasis on systematic phonics during the teaching of reading in the early years of school was the reason that England is now placed fourth out of 43 countries in terms of the reading ability of nine and ten-year-olds. He concluded his speech by highlighting that it is possible to achieve the highest standards for even the most

disadvantaged pupils, stating that 'we need to give all young people their futures back.'

Katharine Birbalsingh, in a candid speech covered a number of topics including her belief in traditional teaching methods, explaining how the distinctive and traditional values and culture of her comprehensive school, which serves an inner-city and economically deprived area and accepts pupils with a wide range of abilities and an array of challenging circumstances, had resulted in her pupils achieving the highest Progress 8 (value-added) score in the country last summer.

She also told of how she had lost heart in the direction private schools are and have been going, highlighting her view that 'too many schools, including many independent ones, adopt progressive teaching methods and approaches,' when she believes they would benefit from a more traditional approach to delivering lessons. She argued that not everything in the

past was good, but that it wasn't all bad either. A greater focus should be placed on knowledge acquisition saying that 'without knowledge, creativity is impossible and that most schools don't make knowledge the main goal in the classroom, when they should.'

In the subsequent Q&A session, Nick Gibb and Katharine Birbalsingh took questions covering how to tackle the recruitment and retention crisis; the opportunities provided by technology and AI; and how schools can help parents by building a strong and distinctive ethos that all pupils and parents can buy into.

The day culminated with a series of breakout sessions with guest speakers from across the sectors that considered topics such as Helping pupils to find their voices; Building the culture and values of a school; Putting effective principles of learning into practice; Governance: Learning across sectors; and Developing character through pupil leadership.



Pictured: Q&A with Ms Birbalsingh and Minister Gibb

Advertorial Feature

## Managing your economy of futures starts from the heart

As the pandemic continues and affects our schools, now is the time more than ever to be futureproof. We must pivot to lead the shift from survive to thrive. Whatever the rest of the year holds, there are three investment themes that can form part of your strategic planning for Sept 2023 and beyond.

Traditionally investment in our sector has concentrated on capital investment in development projects to provide a unique experience or upgrade in facilities. You can have the most amazing facilities in the world, but the real economy of your school is based on three words – just add human. It

has served you well during the pandemic, so let's look now at three ways for you to serve, share and care.

- 1 What do you need to adopt, abandon and adapt to support investing in the future of your school? What is your balance to build on for wellbeing and security?
- 2 Personal investments are key- wellbeing does have an 'i' in it you know! How can you achieve this? What would this look like? One size does not fit all.
- 3 Mutual funds of positivity create growth for your community. Did you know that

one of your top investments is free? Call the bursar now! It is about the power of conversation and time. Each member of staff has knowledge and experience that they can share. How can you leverage this for success?

Invest wisely leader, it is time to write a new chapter for you and your school. But remember, invest in yourself first or growth will not happen. Start your economy of kindness one act at a time your future self will thank you for it.

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# Cultivating Minds

Recent research by LEAF Education emphasises the significance of engaging young minds in the agri-food sector for its growth and adaptation to a changing landscape. In a time of immense challenges for the farming industry, Jon Hutcheon, Farm Manager at Lancing College, West Sussex, takes a look at the College Farm Project and how as well as providing students with hands-on learning it is helping address some of the global issues surrounding farming...

Jeremy Clarkson has done more for the average farmer than any other farming programme. The problems presented in Clarkson's Farm paint an accurate, and sometimes unfortunate, depiction of the realities of farming. Lancing College Farm implements a similar philosophy accepting the challenges of farming whilst arming students with the skills and knowledge of how to solve these.

The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a severe blow to the farming industry, exacerbating existing financial struggles. With meagre returns of around £5 per pig and the cost of animal food skyrocketing by 131% above inflation, farmers have faced immense difficulties. Lancing College Farm has confronted these challenges head-on, adapting its operations to navigate the changing market dynamics. While reducing the size of their sheep flock and exploring alternative revenue streams like hay sales and land rentals, the farm not only aims to maintain financial stability but also to create income opportunities for the future.

But the farm goes beyond profitability; it plays a pivotal role in conservation efforts too. The farm's rare breed sheep serve as crucial components in sustaining the local ecosystem through conservation grazing. Furthermore,

carefully selected commercial sheep are strategically employed to maintain environmental balance by controlling specific grass types. The farm's commitment to preserving biodiversity is further exemplified through the meticulous management of meadows, arable land, and the plantation of tens of thousands of trees. By adopting regenerative and sustainable farming practices across the South Downs, the farm is able to make significant contributions to protecting our environment, and by embracing diverse initiatives such as bird ringing, beekeeping, and tree planting, the farm continually expands its impact beyond traditional farming practices.

The current global landscape, characterised by the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical conflicts such as the Ukraine crisis, has also underscored the urgent need for self-sufficiency in food production. The farm recognises this imperative and actively contributes to solving the intricate puzzle of food shortages. By aligning its operations with DEFRA policies and engaging in sustainable farming practices, the farm sets a standard for the entire industry. Moreover, it instils in students the values of resilience, responsibility, and the ability to tackle complex political and economic challenges.



Jon Hutcheon

In fact, one of the most extraordinary aspects of Lancing College Farm is its seamless integration with education. The farm is uniquely placed to provide a holistic learning experience for students, nurturing their understanding of various disciplines, including biology, chemistry, veterinary sciences, and environmental stewardship.

Students actively participate in farm activities, gaining practical skills and knowledge that extends beyond the realms of traditional academia. From cleaning and bedding to shearing sheep, students gain first-hand insight into the realities of farming and its profound relationship with the natural world. Serving as an invaluable resource for local Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools, Scouts, and other educational groups, the farm fosters a deep connection between the community and sustainable agricultural practices.

In a world where the future of farming hinges on engaging and inspiring the younger generation, the farm aims to nurture a passion for sustainable farming, as well as empowering students with practical skills, and instilling in them the values needed to shape a brighter future for our planet.

**"Efficiency is doing better what is already being done!"**



Rupert Weber, general manager, apetito talks about the hidden efficiencies that schools can consider

when it comes to catering for mealtimes...

There's a lot for schools to consider when it comes to providing quality mealtimes for pupils, and whilst scratch cooking may feel like a great idea – there are some significant 'hidden' efficiencies (aside of the obvious advantages around choice, consistency, and availability) in offering a great quality pre-prepared meal solution.

For example, storage and space is one such advantage. It takes considerable space to store all the ingredients in a safe and organised way to avoid cross contamination and build in suitable kitchen facilities. It can cost many thousands of pounds to refurbish a kitchen and install kitchen equipment, and the constant maintenance that goes alongside that.

Furthermore, it takes typically 50% less labour hours to serve a pre-prepared meal. And with a lower skill level (than a chef or cook), comes a significantly lower hourly rate.

That's before you count in the reduction in utility costs (where schools will be seeing a significant increase in the past year) in the use of gas, electricity (as to cook a meal from frozen is done on efficient oven programmes), and reduction in water use (far less washing up of saucepans and preparation equipment!).

The average industry percentage of food waste that a school experience, is around 33%. This reduces dramatically by using pre-prepared meals to an average of 5%. Hence, not only is it more sustainable but every 1% saved, is a saving that can go straight to the school's top line.



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## Lambing season

York House, Hertfordshire, has welcomed five new-born ewe lambs into its onsite smallholding for a second successful year of lambing. It is the first time many of the prep-aged pupils have had the opportunity to get so close to a lamb, especially one that is just a few hours old.

Smallholding Manager at York House, Tara Warren commented: "The children have been so excited about our new arrivals. What surprised them the most was how quickly the lambs were walking and independently feeding from

mum. It has helped our pupils to understand the reasons why the lambs grow so quickly. The children in our nursery have also enjoyed visiting the lambs every week in their outdoor learning lessons."

The school has also enjoyed naming all of the new additions: Blackcurrant, Bear, Rose, Toffee and Indigo and the York House smallholding club have been lucky enough to visit the lambs regularly, to learn all about their growth and progress.



The lambs will stay in the lambing paddock with their mothers until the end of summer. They also have access to the school's wildlife paddock where they can enjoy running around in the long grass. Once they are old enough, they will eventually move into the valley paddock with their mothers, and they will live a long and happy life.



# Profile

In conversation with Chris Townsend

**Born:**

1st December 1972

**Married:**

to Melanie, a Deputy Head at a local Academy

**Children:**

David and Lydia (both at University now, having been to Felsted)

**Schools and Universities attended:**

Dean Close and Oxford

**First Job:**

Classics Teacher at Dean Close

**First Management Job:**

Head of Boarding at Stowe

**First job in independent education:**

Gap Student at Ardingly College

**Appointed to current job:**

September 2015

**Favourite piece of music:**

It Must be Love (Madness)

**Favourite food:**

Fish and Chips

**Favourite drink:**

Cold pint of lager

**Favourite holiday destination:**

Paxos

**Favourite leisure pastime:**

Cricket, running and reading

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

Blackadder

**Suggested epitaph:**

So long and thanks for all the fish

**Q** Who or what inspired you to get into teaching? Do you still teach?

**A** It would be hard to pin it down to a single influence, although my Grandfather was a Head, as was my Uncle, so there was plenty of teaching in the family. While at Dean Close School, I was very fortunate to have several inspiring teachers and they also had a big impact on my life and career choice. I also spent a gap year helping out at a school, and that gave me a great insight into all aspects of teaching, so I suppose that it was always a possibility that I would end up in teaching, although I was offered my first job (back at Dean Close) because I had applied for the PGCE course at Cambridge, towards the end of my degree. My real reason for taking on the PGCE was that I wanted to play cricket for both Oxford and Cambridge, but that opportunity never arose, because I took up the teaching job instead!

I do still teach, although not very much, and generally try to help out with cover, or pick up a few lessons if someone's options for Classics cannot be fitted into the timetable. It would be good to teach more, but it is hard to be available consistently, and that can end up letting down the students, and imposing upon colleagues, neither of which is great.

**Q** You were educated at an independent school and have worked in them throughout your career. How do you personally, and Felsted generally, interact with local state school heads to gain mutual understanding?

**A** Felsted is very much a part of the local community and I and other members of staff are in constant contact with our opposite numbers in schools across the region. We have really productive relationships with local heads and schools and they understand that we are keen to support them, if we can, to deliver the best education to their own pupils. Often this takes the form of sharing our facilities and several nearby primary schools use Felsted's Astro pitches, music school and drama theatre. We welcome pupils into our school for academic days designed to support certain areas of the curriculum, such as our very popular Science Experience Day for children from local state and independent schools. Felsted is well known as the host of annual Model United Nations Conferences – one for senior pupils and one for prep and primary pupils – both of which are phenomenally successful and give around 200 children the chance to debate issues

of global importance. So we come into contact with local state schools' staff and pupils all the time and several Felsted staff members are even on their boards of governors. This interaction gives us a great insight into the particular challenges other schools face and helps us to work together with them more effectively.

**Q** With a shortage of teachers in your region, Felsted was prompted to devise its own programme in order to encourage and support new teachers as well as retain them. This programme has seen increased uptake. What elements of the scheme have been particularly successful which other schools could follow?

**A** We launched our Early Careers Teachers (ECT) programme in September 2021 and since then it has helped us to attract and keep the type of new teacher our school wants – those who will provide the best possible education for Felsted pupils well into the future. The programme's success is mainly down to it being bespoke – it aligns with Felsted's academic aims and is structured to fit in with our timetable. It's also accessible to all, not just recent graduates, but also to career-changers. The content is broken down into manageable chunks that ECTs discuss with mentors and we hold fortnightly INSET sessions to bring ECTs together to discuss any problems, work through solutions, and to extend their understanding. For example, ECTs have in-house training on supporting neurodiverse students, giving effective feedback and how to put academic research into practice. I was really pleased when inspectors from the Independent Schools Teacher Induction Panel described our ECT programme as 'excellent'; ECTs themselves say they feel they are valued members of the Felsted staff from the outset and they see their skills as teaching professionals developing very quickly so they are able to be immediately effective in the classroom, which is of course what our pupils deserve.

**Q** You offer a wide choice of options at different fee levels. In the senior school for example: Full Boarding (7 nights) £13,675 per term; Weekly Boarder (5 nights) £12,670; Contemporary Boarder (3 nights) £10,945; Day Pupil £8,935. In light of the current economic climate, have you noticed any alteration in the balance between applications for the options?

**A** Felsted is predominantly a boarding school – more than 75% of pupils board – but we deliberately offer a wide choice of boarding arrangements to suit families' needs and those often change over time for a variety



Chris Townsend became the 28th Head of Felsted School, Essex, in September 2015, after serving five years as Deputy Head. Previously, Chris was Housemaster and Head of Boarding at Stowe.



of reasons. Our Contemporary Boarding option (flexi-boarding a minimum of three nights per week) is very popular, particularly for younger boarders, and many eventually progress to weekly or full boarding. When boarders change their arrangements, it is usually related to the developing confidence of that individual and what is the best fit for the pupil and the family, and of course our houseparents are in close contact with parents to make sure we get it right for everyone concerned.

**Q** Felsted was founded in 1564 as a Grammar School by Richard Lord Riche, who had been Lord Chancellor under King Edward VI. Lord Riche endowed the foundation with land in Essex, a farm and various rectories as well as land in Felsted itself, which have provided the school with considerable economic stability over the centuries. Such resources are but a dream for the majority of independent schools. How can the sector as a whole present a unified public profile with such wide disparity of circumstance?

**A** Every morning I look out of the window at our school site and feel grateful that we are able to offer such a peaceful, safe environment for young people to grow up in, and something I am passionate about is finding ways to share what we have with others. We have excellent facilities for sport, for example, so we are involved with the Lord's Taverners' Wicketz programme, which introduces cricket to young people across the region; we also have a partnership with Junior Guildhall London to bring world-class music tuition to local children; and our annual summer school attracts young people from all around the world to Felsted to learn about global issues and develop an understanding of other cultures. Many other initiatives bring people of all ages to our school, year-round. I know that schools right across the independent sector are also opening their doors and making whatever resources they have available to as many people as possible, because at heart we are educationalists and our key aim is to offer the great opportunity of learning. Having said all of that, Lord Riche may have established the school back in 1564, but unfortunately, we do not have an endowment fund that we can draw upon and I am not aware of land ownership beyond the confines of the school!

**Q** Felsted has pledged to make care for the environment a key consideration in every aspect of life at school. Can you describe three of the principal measures you are implementing to achieve this?

**A** As a school we have been mindful of the need to protect the planet for many years, but this year I decided to launch the 'Felsted for a Sustainable Future' initiative to take a more cohesive approach to reducing our impact on the environment and to make sure every single member of the school community understands their role in it and takes action. Re-using and recycling has been ramped up with a switch to biodegradable and plastic-free items as far as possible on the school site (we want no single-use cups anywhere at all), and more points to recycle more things, including batteries, printer cartridges and even contact lenses. Composting and the re-use of natural materials has been stepped up too and we are working hard to re-wild natural habitats on the school site to encourage a variety of species of flora and fauna to thrive, supporting biodiversity. But this is no help if we don't educate young people, so taking responsibility for the world has become a key theme in lessons and activities and the entire school community is being hugely supportive of the new sustainability measures: the pupils themselves are now beginning to lead the way, which gives me great hope for the future.

**Q** AI and ChatGPT in relation to education is all over the news. What steps should staff take to embrace these developments without compromising the integrity of assessed work?

**A** Natural language processing is being revolutionised and new applications are offering many opportunities to enhance teaching and learning. However, there are also associated risks, chiefly the possibility of ChatGPT and other large language models developed by OpenAI generating biased or misleading responses, and the potential for misuse through disinformation and manipulation. At Felsted we are considering how to mitigate these risks (for example by training these large-language models on datasets that are diverse and unbiased), while seeking to educate staff and pupils on responsible use. Once these safeguards are put in place, we envisage being able to use the model as a virtual writing assistant for pupils (particularly helpful for pupils who struggle or those for whom the language is not their first), as a virtual tutor (helping pupils to understand and retain the material they are learning by answering their questions and providing additional information and resources) and as a tool to assist teachers in their daily work (such as creating lesson plans and summaries, and assisting with marking of pupils' assignments by recapping the main

points). As long as AI is used as a tool, it offers every sector great potential and education should benefit significantly.

**Q** Felsted has a dedicated Wellbeing Centre, designed as a calming hub for all members of the Felsted community. Opened in 2018 it was said to be one of the first in-school facilities of its type. What have you noted as the benefits of this initiative for staff, pupils, and parents?

**A** Felsted's Wellbeing Centre is right at the heart of the school campus, a safe space for students and, in fact, any member of the school community to talk and receive guidance from trained professionals. This is where regular training for staff in mental health first aid takes place too. Individuals of any age are encouraged to prioritise and take care of their own wellbeing, and to take advantage of the practical support available to help, including yoga and mindfulness sessions. We also run a number of talks and seminars by visiting experts for parents as well as students, which has meant that as a community we are now much better informed about cultures and behaviours that can have a hugely detrimental impact on others, such as 'The Everyday Sexism Project' and 'Everyone's Invited'.

There is no doubt that the need for support has increased significantly in the wake of the pandemic and the challenge and demand in this area gets greater each year. The most important thing for a school to do is to ensure that it is an environment in which people can talk openly and work collaboratively to provide support where it is most needed.

**Q** Felsted's well-known International Summer School was back last year after Covid suspension. This season offers Global Studies and an English Language pathway, in addition to an immersive Academies selection. How do you staff this major commitment in regular school holidays?

**A** I'm pleased to say that for many years Felsted has run one of the most popular residential International Summer Schools in the UK and it's wonderful to be able to welcome young people back to our campus in person this year. We're expecting around 500 eight to 17-year-olds from all corners of the globe to join us on campus for six weeks of life-changing seminars, discussions and activities aimed at developing their awareness of the world and also improving their language skills.

**Continued >**



# Profile In conversation with Chris Townsend (continued)

This is a major undertaking and one we couldn't even attempt without the support of a substantial staff that comes together just for this purpose. We call it 'Felsted's fourth term' and we employ around 200 current and former teachers and ex-pupils, as well as experts in particular fields and pastoral staff who supervise the boarding houses and the programme of cultural visits and outings (to London and Cambridge, for example) we arrange for the attendees throughout the summer. Our Summer School is led by Felsted's Director of Global Education, Dr Robin Hancock, an expert on global citizenship, who has taught and lectured in South Africa, the Gambia and Costa Rica as well as the United States. Many staff return year after year, and others are local people who enjoy the chance to be active during the summer - it's so rewarding to be a part of this dynamic global community.

**Q** Felsted is a member of the Round Square, an active network of over 230 schools spanning over 50 countries. The Round Square focuses itself on developing its six key principles of internationalism, democracy, environmentalism, adventure, leadership and service 'within the hearts and minds of the next generation! How does Round Square membership impact on the education you offer at Felsted?

**A** Something I particularly like about Round Square is the motto "Plus est en vous!" because it aligns very closely with what we aim to achieve at Felsted - helping every individual to discover what it is that motivates them to take action,

push themselves and make a difference in the world, wherever they find themselves. Felsted is a long-time member of Round Square and those ideals are deeply ingrained in every aspect of education here, which is very broad and outward-looking: we connect with others around the world to develop understanding of other cultures and global issues through international visits, exchanges and conferences, but this is a theme that also runs through lessons in all subjects and inspires the work we do for charities and community groups - our students don't just fundraise, they give their free time and their energy to helping out at food banks and night shelters and, through our long-established international charity partners, help to build and run facilities to support disadvantaged children in some of the world's poorest countries. In this way, our pupils realise their responsibility to make a contribution in life.

**Q** You were Deputy Head at Felsted before becoming Head. What particular challenges face such internal appointments which would not apply to external ones, and how should Deputies prepare for them?

**A** I was Deputy Head for five years at Felsted before being appointed Head in 2015. There are many advantages to an internal promotion, as it allowed me to get to know the school before taking on the new role, to know pupils and parents, and to know staff as well. Since I believed strongly in the ethos that underpins a Felsted education, an all-round education designed to prepare young people for life in a global society, it was

a relatively smooth transition. I think that it would have been much harder to make this move if the school was seeking a dramatic change in approach, when an external appointment might be better. I suppose that the hardest change would be to understand how relationships will change. As a Deputy you are often seen as the link between the Common Room and the Head, but as a Head, you have to have greater objectivity. The other big change, which would be typical for anyone becoming a Head is that you are suddenly expected to be an expert in everything. I remember on my first day getting a really tricky HR question, and I had to admit that I just didn't know; better to know who to ask than to try to answer everything yourself.

**Q** You've recently joined the Board of Essex County Cricket Club. What's been most enjoyable about the role thus far?

**A** It has been a real privilege to join the Board at Essex, a club that has enjoyed some incredible success in the past decade. There is a lot to do at the moment to ensure that the club can continue to enjoy success into the future and Cricket, like many other sports, has faced challenging times recently. Probably the most enjoyable part of the role has been getting to watch a bit of cricket at Essex, and there have been two real highlights. I got to see Jimmy Anderson bowling at Sir Alastair Cook in a recent County Championship game, and then I saw Will Buttleman (a former pupil at Felsted) make 65 for Essex against Ireland.

## 90th Birthday Celebrations

Town Close School, Norfolk, is celebrating 90 years since its inception by distributing tree saplings throughout their community.

Originating as a day and boarding school for boys, the school has evolved through the years, becoming an educational trust in 1969 and co-educational in the late 1990s. The site has grown significantly

with the addition of the Pre-Prep 'Close Lodge' in 1953 and also with an expansion of facilities including a swimming pool, sports hall, performance hall, astro turf and cricket pavilion.

The school also celebrated its 90 years with an afternoon tea for current pupils and families before a drinks and canapés reception for past and present associates of the school and local dignitaries that featured local produce and suppliers. Each attendee was invited to choose a tree sapling to plant in a position of their choice.

Looking forward to the 100th Anniversary in ten years, those present were also invited to write their hopes and aspirations for the next 10 years of Town Close on a paper leaf to be affixed to a 'Wishing Tree'.



Pictured (l to r): Teachers, Mr Richard Walker, Mrs Jess Saul and Mrs Louise Dewsbury

## National Archives 20sStreets Competition

The History Club from Oakhill School, Lancashire, have been named group winners in the National Archives 20sStreets Competition.

Launched last year in partnership with the British Association for Local History, the competition invited entrants to research and share stories connected with the 1920s, focusing on any community within an area covered by the 1921 Census of England and Wales.

Oakhill History Club spent hours researching Longworth Road in Billington and the family who owned Oakhill House to piece together the community's experience as it lived and worked through the trauma of war.

Longworth Road was, at that time, known as Factory Row and Oakhill

students used a variety of sources to find out what happened to the families who worked at the Judge Walmsley Mill including visits to Whalley Library and using the 1921 census through Manchester Central Library.

The prize is an all-expenses paid trip to visit the National Archives in London.



Pictured: Oakhill School History Club



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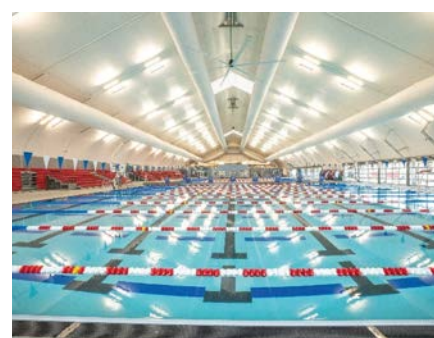
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# Building Plans to Mitigate Risk

If like me, you have spent the best part of the last 12 months trying to make sense of the UK economy you may be caught in two minds as to how to best navigate the current economic climate, writes Carly Toogood...

Whether that is commercially or personally, there is no disputing that we are in uncertain times and this is having an effect on all of us in some way, shape or form.

As a Marketing Manager I like to try and see situations from both sides and believe that there are always solutions to situations; we just have to think a little harder and outside of the box.

Having spent the past few years working with educational professionals, I am grateful to have attended numerous conferences this year and sat with you to listen to the insightful and informative advice that your umbrella organisations have shared as part of their conference agenda's.

One conversation where I believe we can assist you with is the subject of 'Mitigating risk with reconfiguration, segmentation and diversification.'

A common marketing topic: understanding and defining your place within the market and being able to adapt to a changing market.

Applying these principals to the educational industry there are opportunities where Modulek can help and offer solutions for you to consider.

## Reconfiguration

As you look for ways to adapt your existing establishment, you may be considering what changes you can make to increase revenue and put in place growth opportunities to secure your future security.

Extending year groups, adding a 6th form, or offering flexible boarding options may be ideas that are being discussed. Having space with development potential can create the opportunity for a new building that can accommodate additional pupils and enhance your offering for day or full-time boarding students.

## Segmentation

This may be the time for your setting to identify as leading specialist is certain educational subject areas. Strong teaching



facilities and dedicated space that can attract pupils who wish to specialise their studies in designated curriculum areas such as Science, Humanities, The Arts or Sports.

Many of you may be looking to lead the way in your region by providing the very latest teaching spaces and enhancing subject specific areas of expertise. Dedicated new buildings that house the best learning environments and facilities will attract pupils who wish to flourish and pursue their natural areas of interest, curiosity, and ability.

## Diversification

Have you identified an area within your region that you think your educational setting could facilitate a gap or a need? Considering the environment that you are based in, there could be opportunities to extend your offering into the wider community for potential estate expansion.

Whether that is by adding a pre prep building or a multi-use building that could be used by existing pupils and offered out within the community also, a new building can add to your estate portfolio and provide additional revenue.

Throughout history, all periods of challenging times also create



opportunities for growth. In true British fashion, we are unique in our ability to make the best of any situation. The unpredictable British weather, the success or failure of our national sporting teams, we show resilience and keep going.

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**Headteacher  
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# Protection from Sex-Based Harassment in Public Bill

Partners from solicitors Payne, Hicks Beach LLP, Ane Vernon and Mark Jones discuss proposed legislation which looks to make public sexual harassment a specific offence and outline what schools may need to consider in light of this.

Legislation is making its way through Parliament, currently in the Lords, which will make public sexual harassment a specific offence and carry a maximum prison sentence of 2 years (a significant increase from the 6 months currently available). The aim of the legislation is to encourage more victims to report incidents to the police and make people feel safer in public spaces.

The new offence, which would add a new section, 4B of the Public Order Act 1986, will create an offence of causing intentional harassment, alarm or distress to a person in a public space where the behaviour is because of that person's sex.

The new law will focus on unwelcome and unwanted behaviour that is directed at a person in a public space because of that person's sex. Examples of behaviour which will be caught under the new offence include persistent staring, making sexual or obscene comments (catcalling), making obscene or offensive gestures, pressing against someone in a sexual way on public transport, walking closely behind someone as they are walking home, obstructing their path etc.

The proposed new legislation creates additional considerations for schools. Schools will need to heed the existing duties laid down in statutory guidance, applying and where necessary extending the principles appropriately in the light of the proposed new legislation.

On 12 June 2023, a report<sup>1</sup> published by the End Violence

against Women Coalition found that sexual harassment and abuse remain 'pervasive' in UK schools. This includes sexist name-calling, unwanted sexual comments, being pressured to send sexual images, unwanted touching and sexual assault. It is reported that sexual harassment and abuse are disproportionately experienced by girls. LGBTQ+ pupils are also more vulnerable to gender based violence and ethnicity, religious clothing and disability are factors that increase the likelihood of a pupil being subjected to sexual harassment or violence.

Given the shockwave following the Everyone's Invited initiative in 2020 and Ofsted's findings in its report on sexual abuse in schools and colleges in 2021, these new reported statistics demonstrate a critical need for effective preventative education as well as appropriate, robust and consistent disciplinary action when abuse does occur. Ofsted promoted a whole school approach for tackling sexual abuse and stressed the importance of developing a culture in which all kinds of sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are recognised and addressed. This recommendation is now reflected in the DfE's guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)<sup>2</sup> that stresses the importance of preventative education. Equally, the role of RSHE guidance is reviewed with this in mind. Age appropriate education on healthy relationships and respectful behaviour begins in primary school, with RSE in secondary school presenting an obvious forum to build on values such as respect and consent, and to instil the message that

sexual harassment and violence is always wrong. Hand in hand with preventative education on what is unacceptable, or criminal conduct, a clear focus needs to be empowering young people to stand up against inappropriate behaviour and building students' confidence in seeking help.

In terms of discipline, as it stands, schools can apply sanctions for behaviour that occurs on the premises but also for conduct outside the school gates. The DfE guidance Behaviour in Schools sets out relevant considerations for governing bodies and head teachers when applying sanctions for non-criminal inappropriate behaviour, as well as suspected criminal conduct. In making decisions about sanctions outside the school premises a relevant factor is whether the pupil is wearing school uniform. Irrespective of whether the pupil is identifiable as a pupil of the school, it is relevant to consider whether the misbehaviour poses repercussions for the orderly running of the school or a threat to another pupil or a member of the public. Often enshrined as a term in independent schools' parent contracts, a permissible consideration is the effect of the misbehaviour on the reputation of the school. Clearly all disciplinary measures must be applied lawfully and reasonably. Consequently, school policies should set out consequences of poor behaviour to aid transparency and consistent application.

Current guidance stipulates that where the conduct poses a threat to another individual (whether a pupil or member of the public),



Ane Vernon



Mark Jones

the police should be informed. In making the assessment whether to call the police schools need to gather sufficient factual information and preserve relevant evidence. It can be a delicate line to tread but even once the police are involved internal investigations may continue and schools may apply disciplinary measures provided that these do not interfere with the police action.

The proposed new legislation will not only apply to students. School leadership should ensure that all staff are alive to the new offence. Relevant training can be incorporated into existing KCSIE and safeguarding training. Staff will need to be aware of the relevant codes of conduct and policies (including social media and whistleblowing), as well as relevant disciplinary rules and procedures.

Ultimately, everyone associated with a school should remember the importance of professionalism, responsibility and implications for the reputation of the school. Whether or not the Bill becomes law, schools should strive to tackle any kind of harassment and make clear to the entire school community what is and is not acceptable behaviour.

1 <https://www.endviolenceagainstawomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Final-About-Time-WSA-report-090623.pdf>

2 KCSIE incorporates previous DfE guidance Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, which has been withdrawn.

Payne Hicks Beach, [www.phb.co.uk](http://www.phb.co.uk)



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# Census - the independent sector in numbers

The annual census of schools in membership of the constituent associations of the Independent Schools Council has been published. The figures below and in the infographic provide a snapshot of key results from the survey which was carried out in January 2023 and completed by all 1,395 UK member schools. For the full picture visit [www.isc.co.uk/research/annual-census](http://www.isc.co.uk/research/annual-census)

- A total of 59,190 full-time equivalent teachers are employed at ISC schools. The teaching profession (across the education sector as a whole) has a far greater proportion of female teachers, but this imbalance is much less pronounced at ISC schools. 37% of full-time equivalent teachers at ISC schools are men. This compares with 26% in state-funded schools<sup>1</sup>.
- A total of 11,017 full-time equivalent teaching assistants are employed at ISC schools, making up 16% of classroom staff. The equivalent proportion at state-funded schools is 37%, over twice as high<sup>1</sup>. The pupil-teacher ratio at ISC schools is 8.9:1. This compares with an average of 18.0:1<sup>1</sup> across all state-funded schools in 2022.
- This year, 645 teachers from outside the UK came to teach in ISC schools.
- Turnover as % of full-time teachers stands at 16.4% with an overall 1.7% gain.
- Full-time teaching staff coming into ISC schools included 2,472 from independent schools, 2,759 from state schools, and 207 from industry. Of those leaving the equivalent figures are 1,813 going to independent schools; 931 to state-funded schools and 412 to industry.
- ISC schools are continuing to control fee increases, with an annual average increase of 5.6%. This is similar to government figures of wage inflation, meaning fees have grown only slightly in real terms.
- Over a third of all ISC pupils receive some type of fee assistance. The average means-tested bursary was worth £11,807 per annum, an

Barnaby Lenon, Chairman Independent Schools Council said:

"This year independent schools are facing many headwinds following the Covid pandemic, with economic uncertainty, rising costs and priorities such as good mental health and wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability.

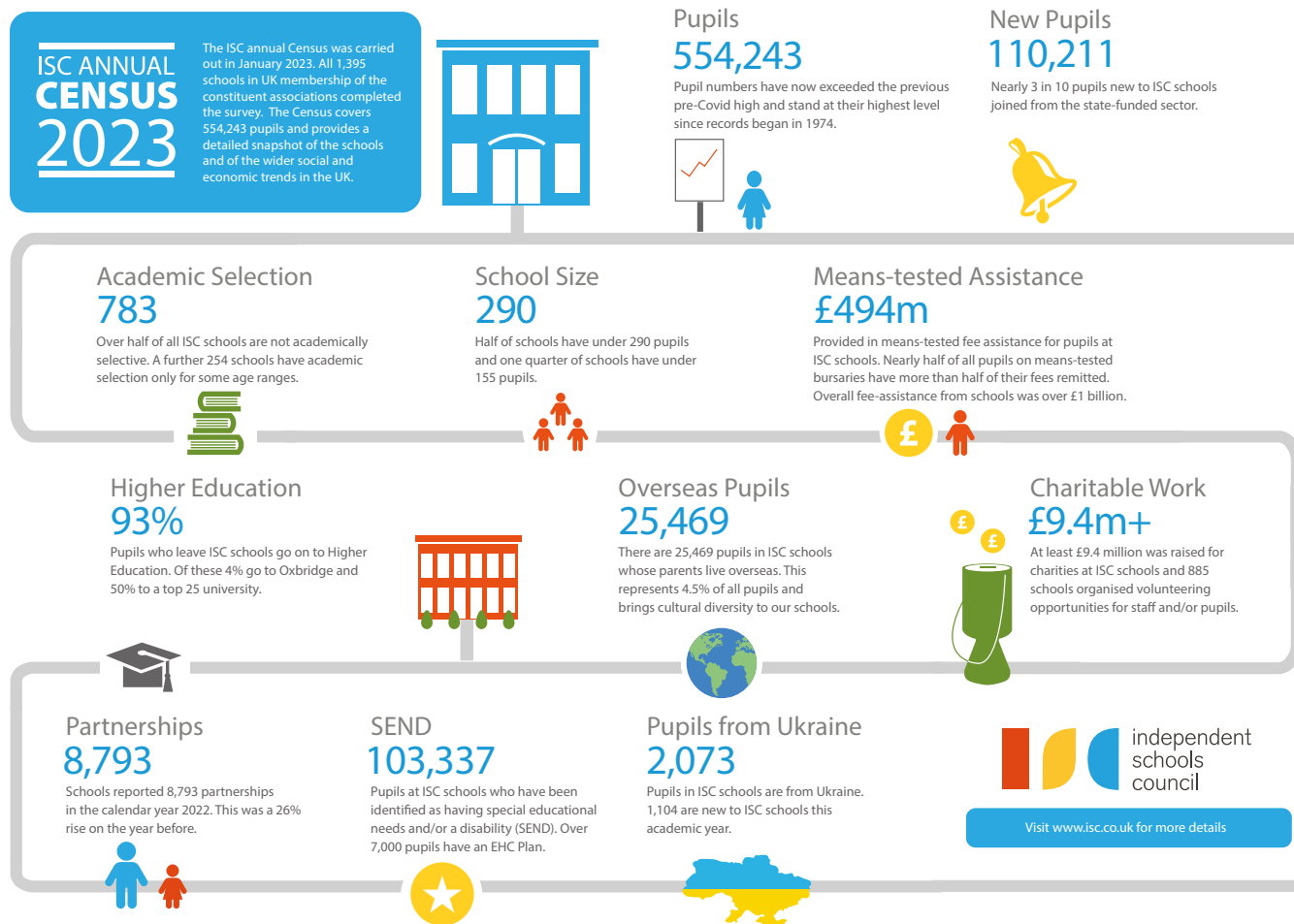
"But this has not dimmed commitment to core charitable purposes, this year illustrated by the fact that there are over 2,000 Ukrainian pupils in independent schools across the UK, many of whom are funded by schools themselves.

"Independent schools in 2023 are intrinsic to the education system, providing educational and community opportunities and ensuring that there is increased capacity and specialism in UK education. But we are keen to do more: ISC would welcome conversations with all those involved in education about how to best share resource and knowledge in the sector to support the mission of raising educational standards for all children."

increase of 8.9% compared with last year.

- 9,620 pupils paid no fees at all, an increase of 23% from last year.
- Based on data from ISC and other economic data from 2021, Oxford Economics<sup>2</sup>, an economic advisory firm with

expertise in forecasting and modelling, analysis discovered that ISC schools contributed £14.1bn to the UK economy in Gross Value Added (GVA) terms. This represents 0.7% of the entire UK economy and is equivalent to the economic activity generated by a city the size of Sheffield.



<sup>1</sup> Based on Department for Education (DfE) data 2021/22 (and hence England only), the most recent year for which figures were available at time of Census publication. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>



# Empowering children through kindness

CEO and Founder of a charity which aims to inspire people to be kind, Jaime Thurston, considers the impact kindness workshops can have in empowering children and discusses the creation of Kindness Ambassadors, a new scheme which aims to encourage children from different schools, different areas and different backgrounds to share good practice and inspire one another to implement kind initiatives in their school.



Research has shown that people who regularly engage in acts of kindness experience lower blood pressure, reduced risk of chronic illnesses, and live longer. Kindness also helps to relieve stress and anxiety and improves overall happiness. Helping children to understand that kindness is something that not only helps other people, but is also a way for them to improve their own wellbeing is an incredibly powerful lesson for them to learn – and one that will hopefully contribute to them leading a longer and happier life.

But against a backdrop of a rise in mental health problems, developing the hearts and minds of children, a fundamental aim of any educator, has become increasingly challenging to achieve.

In 2016, my charity (52 Lives) launched a School of Kindness, running free kindness workshops in primary schools. In those early days, we were working with around 5,000 children a year. Fast forward seven years and demand for these workshops has surged to more than 90,000 children a year.

Interest in the workshops began to rise during Covid. The pandemic highlighted the importance of community at the same time as lockdowns, social distancing and remote learning were taking a toll on children's mental well-being. As schools reopened, educators and parents recognised the importance of equipping children with the skills to navigate emotional challenges and build healthy relationships – and kindness ticks both of those boxes.

Designed to teach children about the importance of kindness, workshops can delve into the science behind it, and explore the impact it has on our physical and mental health. It is important to empower children, helping them realise that their everyday choices matter and that they have the power to create the kind of world they want to live in.

And evaluation of the workshops has found that they have had a profound impact on teachers and pupils alike with 90% of teachers reporting feeling more confident in talking to children about how to

deal with unkind people, 87% of teachers noticing an improvement in children's relationships with their peers, which in turn has fostered a more inclusive and harmonious school environment, and 93% of teachers observing that children became more thoughtful of others.

Instilling kindness in young minds not only cultivates empathy and compassion, but it also fosters a sense of belonging and creates strong, supportive communities – both within schools and in the wider world.

But is a single workshop enough? Of course not. Far more powerful are the adults that children are surrounded by every day. We need to be creating a culture of kindness in our classrooms and in our schools.

This term we have been piloting a Kindness Ambassador scheme with a small number of schools – Thomas's Battersea Prep School, London, St Chads Catholic Primary School, Stretton Sugwas Academy, Hereford, Westerhope Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne, St Bedes CE Primary School,

Colsterworth CE Primary School, Lincolnshire, and Floreat Montague Park Primary School, Berkshire. The scheme aims to encourage children from different schools, different areas and different backgrounds to share good practice and inspire one another to implement kind initiatives in their school. We're hoping to roll it out more widely in the coming terms and also have plans to launch national Kindness Awards later this year.

There's no doubt we are facing challenging times, from mental health problems, to divisions in our wider communities. But the rise in demand for programmes such as ours gives us hope. It demonstrates a collective commitment to being better and doing better. If we can instil the next generation with the values of kindness and compassion and the knowledge that they can use kindness not only to help others but also as a tool to improve their own wellbeing...well, what an incredible world they will live in.

Jaime Thurston is CEO and Founder of the 52 Lives charity, and author of 'Kindness – the little thing that matters most' and 'The Kindness Journal'. Further information is available at: [www.52-lives.org](http://www.52-lives.org)



L to R: Head of The Elms – Faith Potter, Mayoress Rose Sewell, Dr Helen Bilton, and Mayor of Erewash, Councillor John Sewell

## New outdoor learning and play spaces

The Elms, Infant and Junior school to Trent College, Nottinghamshire, has officially opened its newly developed outdoor learning play spaces for the Lower School.

Dr. Helen Bilton (Professor of Outdoor Learning and Play at the

University of Reading) presented to parents and cut the ribbon with the Mayor of Erewash, Councillor John Sewell and his wife Rose, alongside Faith Potter (Head of The Elms), Bill Penty (Head of Trent College) and Deborah Evans (Chair of Governors).

## New pirate ship playground opened

Bede's Prep School, East Sussex, have officially opened their new pirate ship playground.

Based in the grounds of their Holywell Nursery and Pre-Prep building, the playground began construction in the spring. It features a climbing frame, slide, bridge and rope ladder all in the shape of a ship. The playground is suitable for younger children in the Nursery to Year 2.

Local businessman and philanthropist, Mr Keith Ridley, cut the opening ribbon on the new pirate ship. Mr Ridley was joined by special guest, princess mermaid Ariel, who used the pirate ship to take the children on a magical

adventure using their imagination!

The grand opening welcomed Bede's Prep pupils – from Nursery to Year 2 as well as their parents and guardians.



Keith Ridley cutting the ribbon to officially open the new playground

# Event to promote creativity and wellbeing in children

Welcoming over 300 teachers and educationalists from state and independent schools the 2023 Bryanston Education Summit took place this month (June).

The theme of this year's Education Summit was 'Learn to love your mind' and focussed on new ideas to develop imagination, curiosity and creativity in children. Speakers included education specialists and advisers, child psychologists, inclusion experts and senior executives from the creative industry.

Head of Bryanston, Richard Jones, emphasised the importance of children loving their minds and using creative thought in his opening address: "It's anyone's guess what jobs the next generation will be doing. The rise of Artificial Intelligence, the metaverse and other advances in technology represent a paradigm shift in the employment landscape, so the ability to adapt to change and take new challenges in one's stride will be essential. That's why the power and enjoyment of creative thinking is so fundamental in the education of today's children."

Daljit Nagra delivered the keynote speech. The poet, creative writing

lecturer and Chair of the Royal Society of Literature was responsible for the poem read by James Nesbitt at the coronation celebration for King Charles III.

Peps Mccrea, educator, designer and author, used his presentation to emphasise how a decline in the motivation levels of pupils as they progress through their school years should be a "call to arms for the teaching profession." He highlighted the importance of techniques to help boost motivation levels of children such as behavioural and structural routines, nudging the unwritten rules and social norms of communities as well as ways to gain buy-in and a sense of belonging.

Such an approach to education was echoed by other speakers including David Price OBE, the author of the Amazon best-seller 'How we'll work live and learn in the future' and Rob Coe Visiting Professor of Education at the Centre for Mathematical Cognition at Loughborough University. Education reformer, Bill Lucas, talked about the need for a supportive environment and culture to allow creativity to flourish.

Bradley Busch an expert in the use of cognitive science and advanced

learning techniques to improve education attainment, spoke about the need for teachers to see through the 'illusion of learning'. "Providing the right answers to standard questions is a measure of recall not of successful learning. It's far better to interleave concepts between different subject areas and to allow pupils to compare, contrast and interpret. This enhances the learning process and helps to focus attention by integrating new information with existing prior knowledge."

Equality, inclusion and the need to think beyond convention to reflect the different learning needs of individuals featured prominently in many of the speaker presentations, including Elly Chapple, Dr Pippa Busch, Hannah Hamid and Bryanston's Deputy Head of Pupil Development and Wellbeing, Dr Preetpal Bachra.

And Dr Ruth Moyse, a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Southampton, highlighted the need to reframe the narrative around autism. "A medicalised, deficit-based understanding of autism creates stigma, which is reinforced by negative language, and can result in assumptions and premature

judgements around abilities and needs," she said. Autistic young people have a way of thinking that is different, not less. Many are great problem-solvers, with exceptional observational skills, the ability to hyper-focus and a values-driven mindset. Our role as educators should be to accept them as they are, foster a sense of belonging and connection, and adopt a strengths-based, person-centred approach that enables them to thrive."

Other speakers included paralympic athlete, Sam Ruddock; poet and memoirist, Hannah Lowe; award-winning Creative Director, Paul Kitcatt; Sascha Evans and Gareth Morewood.

For the first time, a 21st Century Parenting event was also held the day prior to the Summit to provide new insight and practical advice to help parents rise to the ever-evolving challenges of modern parenting. Over 100 parents attended this inaugural event where they had access to experts with a wealth of knowledge on topics ranging from self-harm and eating disorders to gambling, drugs and bullying.

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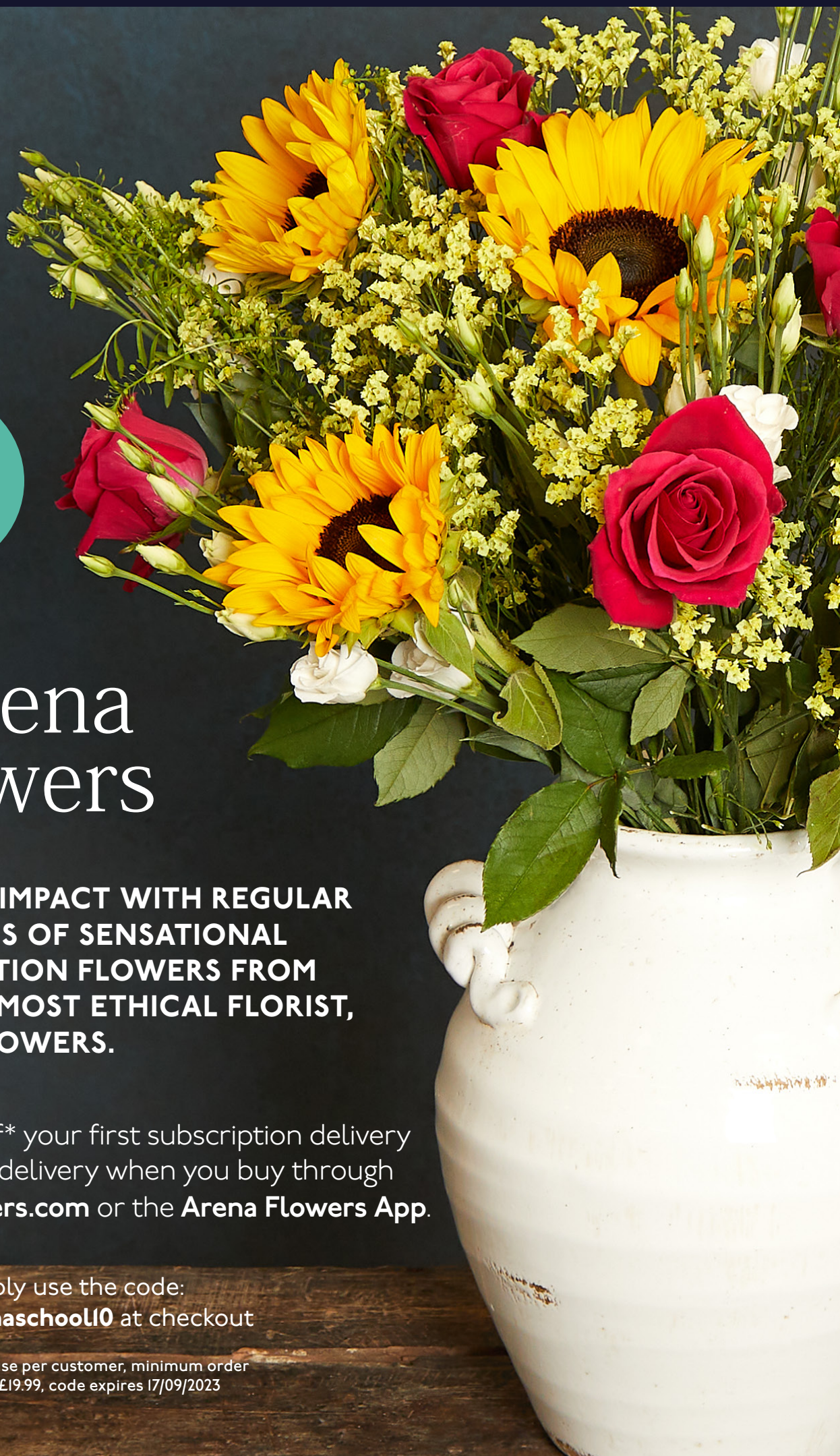
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# Brick Clubs – nurturing pupils' social and emotional wellbeing

Clinical Psychologist, Dr Gina Gómez de la Cuesta, outlines some of the ways Brick Clubs can help support children's social and emotional development.

Fun, play and friendships all play a crucial role in supporting children's mental health and wellbeing at school. While the isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic affected everybody, young children were particularly impacted. Some have missed out on enough opportunities to interact with other children and develop social skills and social confidence. Some teachers have noticed that more pupils need extra support with anxiety, forming relationships, sharing with others, building self-confidence, and engaging in social interactions with one another.

All children have different ways of socialising and communicating with others and the world. For neurodivergent children in particular, the busy and, at times, overwhelming nature of the school day means it is especially important they are given opportunities to play with their peers in an accepting and relaxed environment, away from the formalities of the classroom. Recent studies<sup>1</sup> suggest that interactions which encourage fun and enthusiasm are just as important as those that develop academic knowledge or skills.

Drawing on the latest research on neurodiversity and learning through play has led to the development of the LEGO®-based

Brick-by-Brick® programme in partnership with the LEGO Foundation, academic experts and autistic consultants.

Known to children as Brick Club, the programme aims to offer all children, not just those who are neurodivergent, positive and meaningful experiences in playful sessions. Through collaborative LEGO play, children have fun, make friends with others who have a shared interest in LEGO bricks, and develop their communication skills, confidence, and social and emotional wellbeing.

## Building relationships

Collaborative LEGO play can be used in school settings to offer all children welcoming opportunities to socialise with other children who share a passion for LEGO building, thereby helping to create a deeper sense of belonging.

Through Brick Clubs, children work together to build LEGO models either by using instructions or creating their own models, depending on their preference. With the encouragement of the adult leading the session, the children can relax and be themselves as they collaborate with others to build sets. The friendships that are formed during the building process often continue outside of Brick Club and in the playground.

Playing with LEGO bricks, in sessions such as Brick Club, also provides a space for pupils to practice turn-taking and sharing by taking on different roles in the LEGO building process – helping them to understand how to be flexible, listen and cooperate with others.

## Building playful experiences

Research suggests<sup>2</sup> that children learn best through play, and so bringing more playful experiences into the school day can be particularly useful to spark children's innate curiosity. Fun sessions such as Brick Club allow learning to take place in a guided way that allows the children to share control of their play, rather than being instructed by an adult.

This type of guided play has been proven as one of the most effective ways to support the development of children's turn taking, problem solving, creativity, and so much more. Adults play a critical role in facilitating this learning; skilful facilitators spot opportunities to integrate learning goals in playful ways, where children are actively engaged and enjoying themselves in a meaningful activity. Ultimately, being able to have fun with LEGO bricks in a relaxed setting on a regular basis has a wider positive impact on children's emotional wellbeing.



Dr Gina Gómez de la Cuesta

## Building confidence

Having the opportunity to play with other children in a small group environment also means that pupils develop the confidence to practice new phrases or social skills without the added pressure from others. Pupils then feel empowered to apply these skills to other subjects and scenarios within school.

Collaborative LEGO play doesn't just support children's self-confidence. Some of these courses, such as the Brick-by-Brick® programme, are also CPD accredited, which means that they contribute to staff professional development too; increasing staff knowledge around how they can support pupils with a wide range of needs.

It has never been more important for teachers and schools to support the social and emotional wellbeing of all children. By introducing playful sessions, such as collaborative LEGO play at school, pupils with a multitude of needs will be supported to have meaningful social opportunities, develop friendships and confidence, and most importantly, have fun, enabling them to thrive in all aspects of life beyond school.

<sup>1</sup> Generation Alpha, CAM Magazine, 21 April 2023, <https://magazine.alumni.cam.ac.uk/generation-alpha>

<sup>2</sup> Neuroscience and learning through play: a review of the evidence, The Lego Foundation White Paper, [https://cms.learningthroughplay.com/media/zbcd21td/neuroscience-review\\_web.pdf](https://cms.learningthroughplay.com/media/zbcd21td/neuroscience-review_web.pdf)

Dr Gina Gómez de la Cuesta is the founder and director of Play Included, [www.playincluded.com](http://www.playincluded.com)

## New health and wellbeing centre

A new health and wellbeing centre, designed by Adam Richards Architects, has broken ground at Mayfield School, East Sussex.

Commissioned in spring 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, the brief was for a new building to rehouse the school's existing centre as well as offering a welcoming, safe and discreet environment supporting students' physical and mental wellbeing.

Pictured: Mayfield School Health and Wellbeing Centre (artist impression of the courtyard view)

Built within a conservation area, the 300sq m cross-laminated timber and natural stone brick building will introduce a new sustainable approach to the school's facilities.

The new single-storey building is long and low-lying, and contains a 'secret' enclosed garden. It features a four-bed dormitory, treatment and counselling rooms and two isolation rooms, all of which look onto the enclosed garden so that

all patients can benefit from the healing properties of the garden. Ancillary spaces include a reception and waiting room, kitchen which can also serve as a meeting space; as well as an overnight duty room with ensuite.

The building will also provide space for lessons on health and wellbeing. Inspired by the Maggie's Centres typology which takes cues from domestic settings to create inviting spaces,



the project aims to create an environment that is hygienic without being clinical and cold, and which has a domestic quality.

Building is due to complete on site towards the end of 2023.



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# Art: Taking a holistic approach

At times a by-product of learning, others a very definite part of the journey students are taken on, ensuring enjoyment, happiness and fulfilment are part of what is taught in school. Head of Art at Woodbridge School, Suffolk, James Hutch, believes that taking a holistic approach to teaching is essential, in which students are taught not only about how to earn money and achieve professional success, but also how to increase the chance of living a happy and fulfilling life. Here he takes a look at the approach the school art department is taking.



When teaching any subject, there are clear objectives and outcomes in terms of the curriculum-lead syllabus, and exam success – but as we all know, there's also so much more!

The Art Department at Woodbridge is built on the philosophy that each student has what it takes to be an artist, by offering a curriculum set around key points of co-curricular intervention, industry experience and collaboration. Beyond practical skills students identify, celebrate, hone and distil creativity, work ethic, cognitive agility and steadfastness. Our approach is

to look holistically at each artist coming through the ranks and imprint aptitudes and practical skills that increase a person's chance of fulfilment, and not just in exam success. Self-fulfilling independence is the journey and the destination.

Teachers in our Art and Photography department teams are all practising artists and photographers, who bring their contemporary experience to students. Each of us has explored and taken different pathways to artistic success – and happiness. Sharing this with our students ensures they understand that while

there is a formal pathway in terms of objectives to achieve and criteria to meet in terms of exams, there is also something else – finding the artist/creative they want to be, and supporting and encouraging them every step of the way.

Exhibitions bring opportunities for young artists, taking their art to those who will admire, critique and understand it – a vital part of development. We hold a number of exhibitions of our students' work, in school and within professional galleries and artist spaces within our community – and we encourage our students to sell their artwork too, which they do so successfully.

ArtForms is an annual show which takes place at a local gallery, and features work from our Year 8 to 13 students. It's a great opportunity to reveal their talent, skill and wonderful idiosyncrasies to the world! Great Editions takes place at Snape Maltings, featuring retrospective work from Year 13 artists spanning six years. Our Summer Exhibition takes place each year celebrating Year 11 to 13, showcasing their works and accomplishments. And we've recently introduced a new annual calendar event called Insight in which Years 6 and 7 exhibit alongside Year 12 students. This show is purposely situated in the first term so as to give viewers a sense of what it's like to begin a creative journey rather than finish one. Rising stars grapple with what they will become. We even have a miniature gallery in the department, named Mini\*Super, after a print by Ross Holden who is the illustrious art technician. Sixth form students have to plan and curate shows within this miniature space.

## Supporting students past and present

A value held throughout the entire school is one of community, and that includes prospective, current and past students. We've recently begun supporting what we call our Old Woodbridgians, those who have left school and have embarked upon the next part of their artistic journey. Most recently two of our OWs held an exhibition of their combined artwork in a local gallery, showing and selling their works, reinforcing the importance of exhibiting their work, sharing their talents and providing themselves with an income which can propel the next part of their journey or life. It was an incredible pleasure to be part of this with them, for them to have turned to us for support and to have watched them in all their splendour as they wowed the town with their work and sold the majority of their pieces.

This is what we teach, share, want and desire for our students, not just success, but the feeling and advantages that success brings; how it sustains personal and professional development and progression, as well as enriching others' lives as they hold and display the artwork they've purchased.

Of course and absolutely, learning, achieving and success are an important part of learning, but mustn't be the only goal. Life after all isn't only about those things; enriching students' experiences and encouraging them to have expectations beyond professional and financial success is a vital part of education.

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# Lecture Programme: Raising pupil aspirations

Dame Allan's Schools, Newcastle upon Tyne, and alumnus Mark Dolder, wanted to 'give back' but for his investment to have a significant impact on pupils. His vision was to set up an empowering new series of talks to help inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs, business leaders, scientists and creative talent.

Working in close partnership with Mark, who was a pupil at Dame Allan's Schools between 1971 and 1978, the Schools launched The Lectures at the start of the academic year. The decision was made to open the doors, not only to senior pupils, but to parents, staff and the wider Dame Allan's community.

Mark has pledged to fund the lecture series for the first three years.

"I've said from the very start that if anyone in the audience thinks bigger, aims higher, or exceeds the expectations they have set for

themselves as a result of hearing our speakers, then the project will have been a roaring success!

"It's always been about giving pupils the opportunity to raise their aspirations and feel inspired. It's the very reason I wanted to give back in this way."

Having first scoped the project with the Principal, Will Scott, Mark then worked closely to develop the idea with the Schools' Head of Sixth Form Paul Terry, who has led The Lectures internally with operational support from Katherine Leonard, Development Officer, and Rebecca Miller, Head of Admissions and Communications.

The impact has been significant, with all four speakers leaving a lasting impression on their audiences.

Motivational speaker Marcus Child opened The Lectures series with a talk on the importance of instilling

self-belief, maintaining a positive outlook and setting goals.

Second to the stage, was leading behavioural economist and author Roger Martin-Fagg who presented a lecture to students with an interest in economics and business.

Then Dragons' Den star and founder of global business Crafter's Companion, Sara Davies, looked back on her own transformative schooldays during her talk to pupils.

The series closed with a talk by Professor Ruth Gregory, mathematician and physicist who attended Dame Allan's between 1974 and 1981. She shared her passion for cosmology and explored the existence of black holes with an audience of senior pupils interested in science.

Reflecting on the series, Mark said: "Talking with students and watching their interactions with



the speakers has given me a great sense of satisfaction that I hadn't anticipated... we are now planning for next year."

Head of Sixth Form, Paul Terry, who will continue to work closely with Mark on the programme said: "It's so important that we encourage our students to be intellectually curious and to have opportunities to meet people who have achieved great things.

"It's been rewarding to see lots of students with their hands up, keen to ask questions or to stay behind at the end to speak to our guest speaker. These are experiences that will last a lifetime and will hopefully continue to inspire throughout."



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# Turf Tank Pays for Itself in More Ways Than One at Worksop College



Efficiency, labour saving, recruitment and quality are some of the reasons Worksop College decided to utilise the Turf Tank One automated line marking robot. After just 11 months Bursar of Worksop College and Ranby House, Andrew Graham, says the machine has paid for itself.

The independent school, owned by the Woodard Corporation, educates children from age three up to 18, with sports playing a vital role when teaching principles and building communities. Providing quality surfaces for this to take place is paramount, and through using the Turf Tank, perfection is guaranteed while the grounds team are free to work on other areas of the site.

Andrew played an integral role in acquiring the Turf Tank, analysing it from financial and practical standpoints, and has experienced the impact automated line marking can make on all areas of a school.

## Why did you start looking into robotic line marking?

We first started looking at a robotic line marker a year and a bit ago. My head groundsman came to me

and said he wanted to retire early. He had an enormous amount of experience, he came from a football background, and we realised that it was going to be a massive loss to the school.

We set about trying to recruit, and it was really difficult to find quality ground staff with experience. So, we started to investigate automated line marking machines. We looked at several and Turf Tank came up the best from all those that we were looking at.

So, we were considering it in terms of efficiencies. It wasn't about replacing people; it's about the efficiencies we can derive from the robot. We calculated that the cost would be paid for within 11 months, so monetarily, it is a real boost to the school in that regard and in other areas, one being that we use at least a third less paint when marking pitches.

For example, when we're marking a rugby pitch, the automated

robot takes 26 minutes. It would have taken our grounds manager several hours, and he was highly experienced.

## Researching a new technology online is one thing, but seeing it in action at your school is another. What was your first experience of the Turf Tank?

We invited Turf Tank to come and give us a demonstration, which went very smoothly. They were exceptionally professional in their approach, very helpful, and not at all pushy. I would highly recommend that anybody looking into automated line marking machines should request a demonstration. It's well worth it. We were absolutely taken aback at how accurately and quickly the various sports pitches could be marked out.

Having seen how effective it could be, how has that translated into efficiencies for your grounds and estate team?







a last-minute let where we needed to create a five-a-side pitch which didn't originally exist. They were able to accommodate that in no time at all. So, we haven't got to worry about who's at work, do we have to call someone in over time. None of that happens. It's all dealt with within the normal working day, and we can respond quite quickly.

**From your own experience, would you recommend other Bursars to consider adopting this technology?**

If I were talking to another Bursar regarding the use of this technology, I would encourage them to investigate it for themselves and do their own calculations as to the efficiencies they can make. It certainly made a difference to our school. It's made a massive difference to our estate and grounds team. And in fact, my estate's manager is delighted that I agreed to sign the contract to take on Turf Tank.



It was a real eye-opener for my estate manager. We have gained such efficiencies that we haven't had to recruit any more people. And absolutely, while the robot is doing its job, the grounds team are mowing the pitches, and they're going about their other roles, which they can fulfil in a full working day.

If we have requests from other organisations that want to let our pitches, we can accommodate them very, very quickly. It's a really easy job to redraw and remark any kind of pitch that we want at the drop of a hat.

Our enterprise manager came to the estate's team the other week with

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# Transferring lessons from the pitch to the classroom

With the Women's World Cup due to kick-off in New Zealand and Australia, former professional footballer Lauren Walker, who played for the likes of Aston Villa, Arsenal and Wolves, outlines five ways in which she is bringing lessons she learnt from the sport to the classroom in her role as Biology teacher at Derby Grammar School, Derbyshire.

As a Biology teacher and a former professional footballer, I think sport is something every child should have exposure to because it teaches so many good lifelong skills, while benefitting your physical and mental well-being.

There are lessons that elite sport taught me which have equipped me for life and learning in so many other fields.

The first of these is:

## Teamwork

It may seem a cliché, but you really can't win in football on your own. Clubs may have the best players money can buy, but if they don't work well together, the club will not succeed.

My philosophy in the classroom is: we are a team, and we work together and help one another.

I tell students: "I'm ready to do the best I can do, planning the best lessons, preparing the best resources, but I need you to do your side of the bargain, making sure you engage, contribute, give the time, care and attention to homework. If we have that two-way process, doing our own individual roles well, we can work effectively as a team."

In lessons I have split the class into groups before and each had to go and research a specialised cell and present back their research to the rest of the class. This is an example of how the class works as a team – if one group hadn't done their work well, they would be letting the class down.

Through working in pairs to complete practical tasks and mixing those pairs up, pupils

learn to establish different relationships and engage across the classroom.

That was the same on the football field, I played left back or left wing and managers would typically experiment with different combinations of left back and left midfield and how well we developed a rapport, so you got to work with different pairings.

## Communication

Communication on the sports field is fundamental. If I want to receive the ball in front of me or at my feet, I need to be able to communicate, and similarly I need to read other people effectively to understand what they need from me or are about to do.

These verbal and physical ways of communicating are important in the classroom, as well as written communication.

As a teacher you try to develop communications across those areas. I often start lessons with "Think, Pair, Share". I pose a question to consider, and they discuss with a partner and share what their individual thoughts are. After a period of time, we stop and share with the rest of the group. This is a way of developing communication and appreciating individual points of view.

## Respect

When we communicate, one of the most important values I try to embed in class is making sure we are always respectful. We need to be respectful of each other, if someone is talking, we listen and allow them the opportunity

to speak and equally if I am teaching, they listen respectfully. We appreciate that everyone is different and we value that and each other's input.

Respect is hugely important in sport and I think we have seen the emphasis on respect in football now. You must listen to your teammates and the opposition. We must realise that we are all different and that is great because it brings different strengths to a team and that is important for pupils to understand in the classroom as well.

## Resilience

Resilience is a big one you want to instil in pupils. We all have setbacks, but it is about helping them to evaluate these.

During my football career, my biggest break was being chosen by Arsenal. It meant leaving my A-Levels and moving to London as a teenager to play and train with what were regarded as one of the best women's teams in the country. But breaking into the first team, which was filled with players of the highest calibre who paved the way in women's football, the likes of Kelly Smith, Alex Scott, Karen Carney and Jayne Ludlow, was frustrating.

It forced me to look at other options, to realise that as that door closed I needed to be creative and look at other options rather than letting it stop me in my tracks.

In the classroom I try to foster an environment where it is okay to make mistakes, it is how we react and respond to those to move forward positively which is important.



One way I do this is to encourage pupils to reflect. After an assessment, we reflect on how they had prepared for the assessment, how much revision did they do, revision techniques they tried, were there any things they wished they had done more or that worked well. That way, when they get their results, they can see patterns, so 'when I did x,y,z I performed well but when I did a,b,c my results weren't as good'. They realise their areas of strength and areas for development.

This is similar in football. Every match was recorded by a performance analyst and, with the manager, they would look at what areas of the game we needed to work on, then our training would focus on those areas. And that's something I do in the classroom. When we've identified areas for development, I set intervention tasks in the classroom to address those areas.

## Self-discipline

Football taught me how to self-motivate. I still run and do strength conditioning training every day because of the foundations I got through sport.

But that self-discipline can also transfer to studying and I applied the same focus to training to become a teacher during the latter days of my Women's Super League days with Aston Villa, as I did to playing the sport.

Those are values I also try to bring out in my classes and I emphasise the importance of time management and working wisely and making good choices.





## Sedburgh Super Tens Champions

Rugby boys from Kirkham Grammar School, Lancashire, have won the Sedburgh Super Tens following a 17-5 win in a final against Sedburgh School, Cumbria. The boys won two of their three group

games to qualify for the cup, and took the cup in the final for a second consecutive year – the first time in the cup's history that Kirkham have won the cup back-to-back.

Pictured: The Sedburgh Tens team

## U18 National Water Polo Champions



Bolton School Girls' Division, Greater Manchester, U18 water polo team are national champions, following an 8-5 win against Notting Hill and Ealing High School, London.

The team, cheered on by Head of Division Mrs Lynne Kyle, started the finals by beating last year's winner Alleyn's School, London 9-2. This was followed by another win as they overcame Highgate School, London 11-4. They then secured

their place in the final with an 8-2 win against Trinity School, Surrey.

Earlier in the year the Girls' Division U15 team also won the national title. The U13 team were silver medallists, losing by a single goal in their final at Northampton.

Two of the victorious U18 team, Harriet Dickens and Lucy Blenkinship along with Junior Boys' teacher Mr Winstanley, have also played senior international water polo for their country this year.

Pictured: The U18 Water Polo Team from Bolton School Girls' Division

## ISA School Athletics Finals

A Year 10 pupil at Beech Hall School, Cheshire, has smashed the ISA long jump record at a recent regional ISA School Athletics event, catapulting himself and Beech Hall into the National Finals.

Isaac jumped an incredible 6.13 meters in the regional heats and hopes to improve on this at the ISA National Athletics Finals at the Alexander Stadium in Birmingham.

Pictured: Isaac at the ISA School Athletics regional event



## British Powerlifting Championships



Sixth form student, Jodie Fox, from St Margaret's School, Hertfordshire, has recently competed against hundreds of other young people in the Sub-Junior and Junior British Powerlifting Championships in Solihull. She lifted a regional record in weight for her age, coming fourth place in the UK.

The championship ran across five days, where Jodie Fox competed in the sub-junior women's 69kg class. The event involved three different lifts in competitive powerlifting: the squat, bench and deadlift. Each athlete had to perform each lift three times, increasing the weight each time. The highest scoring attempt for each lift is added together to give a total score.

Jodie's total lift in the British

Pictured: Jodie Fox at the British Powerlifting Championships

Championships was 310kg, which was a regional record. This was made up of the highest squat – 120kg, a regional record and personal best, bench – 55kg another personal best, and finally deadlift – 135kg, a regional record and another personal best.

Jodie's success saw her reach a closely fought battle for third place where she narrowly missed out by only 2.5kg, coming fourth in the country for her age and weight class. Up until a year ago, Jodie had never even heard of powerlifting. She was introduced to it by her personal trainer, who noticed that she was unusually strong for her age. She has been powerlifting since April 2021 and she trains four times per week.

## Kick about with Spanish legends at Real Madrid



60 students from the Stephen Perse Foundation, Cambridgeshire, have returned home following a once-in-a-lifetime football tour at Real Madrid football club in Spain.

Four teams of budding footballers from Years 8, 9 and 10 learned from some of the best Real Madrid coaching staff at the Real Madrid Valdebebas training centre, each coming away with their own club training kit.

Pictured: Students from Stephen Perse Foundation at Real Madrid FC

The Under 13, 14 and Under 15 boys' and girls' teams from Stephen Perse Foundation had the opportunity to play a fixture against local Spanish opposition, with the Under 14 and Under 15 teams winning their games against Escuela Municipal de Fútbol Gallur. The students also enjoyed attending a La Liga match between top Spanish teams Atlético Madrid and Real Betis.

## Opening of school nursery extension

Marmalade sandwiches were the only thing missing as Hugh Bonneville, star of the Paddington Bear films, paid a visit to officially open the nursery extension at Highfield and Brookham Schools, Hampshire.

The star, who also starred as Lord Grantham in the hit drama Downton Abbey, read an excerpt from Michael Bond's wonderful Paddington Bear tale.

The new open-plan extension has enabled three-form entry

throughout the pre-prep. It measures around 100 square metres internally and has big windows to let in lots of natural light. It also has a retractable wall to allow a space to be closed off for the youngest children to sleep.

Highfield Head Suzannah Cryer said: "We're tremendously grateful for Mr Bonneville taking the time out of his busy schedule to read to the children, a treasured memory for children and adults alike."



Pictured: Hugh Bonneville reading to nursery children

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Upper Basildon, Reading  
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### Editorial:

Angharad Jones T: 01635 201125  
E: [editorial@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk](mailto:editorial@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk)

### Design studio/pre-press production/website:

Andrew Wicks T: 01635 201125  
E: [studio@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk](mailto:studio@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk)

### Editor & Publisher, Distribution:

Kimble Earl T: 01491 671998  
E: [admin@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk](mailto:admin@independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk)

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Printed by Micropress Printers, Reydon, Suffolk.



# School future now assured

Kilgraston School, Perthshire, has been saved from closure thanks to an eleventh-hour campaign by parents and alumni and the subsequent involvement of an external investor.

On 1st June 2023 the school announced a £2m funding gap and its intention to close just 3 weeks later on 24th June. The shortfall was attributed to Covid lockdowns and travel restrictions which impacted demand from international boarders. Thomas Steuart Fotheringham, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, on announcing the closure in a statement said: "This has been an extremely challenging and heart-breaking decision... However, having considered and pursued all other alternatives to exhaustion, we are, for reasons of financial viability, left with no alternative."

In response to hearing the news that the school would shut, a Parent Action Group launched a fundraising campaign raising over £1million in 48 hours through donations made by parents, alumnae and former donors in a bid to save the school.

This support encouraged the interest of a commercial investor, education provider Achieve Education, whose directors include Michael Farmer, Executive Director at Effingham Schools Trust and a former head of Kilgraston, and Barry Farrell, a former Kilgraston School Bursar. The proposal from Achieve Education

was put to parents both existing and prospective and a vote of confidence was passed. The school has now agreed the deal following a process of legal and financial due diligence.

In a joint statement released to ISM Kilgraston School and Achieve Education Limited said: "We are delighted to be able to confirm that Kilgraston School and Achieve Education Limited have signed a formal agreement that will ensure the long-term future and much-needed financial strength and stability for Kilgraston School.

"We would like to thank parents, guardians and alumni. Their commitment and support to the school has been overwhelming and has allowed this new chapter in its history to become a reality. We will work closely with them to restore their faith in the school and continue to provide the outstanding educational and pastoral opportunities it offers.

"Achieve Education will work in partnership with headteacher Mrs Tanya Davie and her team to actively support them during this initial period of transition.

"Achieve Education and Kilgraston School will continue to provide the

same ethos, values and traditions that pupils and parents have come to expect throughout its 93-year history."

In a press release from the Kilgraston Parents Action Group to the Kilgraston Community, the Group said: "During the campaign, we called for pledges to save Kilgraston. People came forward to offer an extraordinary level of support with promised donations. Going forward, there will be no obligation for anyone who pledged to make that payment. However, those pledges could be a cornerstone of Kilgraston's future. We will now pass on the details of all pledges to the school's Parents' Association. They will explore how such support might help to create a lasting legacy, ringfenced in a separate Centenary Foundation, to support the school up to and beyond 2030."

Head Tanya Davie is reported as noting that recent events had demonstrated the economic difficulties faced by schools, saying: "In such a competitive market, I didn't want us to lose our identity as an all-girls Sacred Heart school, but we still need to be able to survive in a tough commercial world."

A statement from the SCIS in response to the initial closure announcement highlighted some of the challenges facing schools today saying: "Kilgraston's closure is a stark reminder of the financial pressure independent schools face, notwithstanding the impact of political measures – current and proposed – which treat independent schools separate from all other not-for-profit bodies."

Achieve Education Limited already works with other independent schools including Staffordshire schools, Abbotsholme and Chase Grammar School and currently places over 200 overseas students in the UK. Companies House list the remaining directors as Chinese Nationals, Chenming Bao (who is listed with significant control holding over 75% shares) and Tong Zhou. The company, in its Group Strategic Report, Report of Directors and Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ending August 2021, writes that following the establishment of an online learning platform in response to the pandemic they have developed partnerships with schools in China and placed the provision.

## School closure

The Governors of Park School for Girls, Ilford, Essex, have announced the closure of the school with effect from the last teaching day of the Summer Term, 5th July 2023. They stated that a number of external factors have made the context especially challenging, with the Covid pandemic and the recent cost of living crisis adding very significant pressures on current parents and the pipeline of new pupils into the school, all having a fundamental impact on the cost of running the school. Despite best endeavours to secure a purchaser and carry out

a thorough and conscientious exploration of other options, including significant cost savings, they were not able to secure funding and the school's financial future.

Head Teacher, Catherine Redfern said: "This is a very challenging time for small independent schools who are feeling the impact of these unprecedented times, perhaps even more than the bigger independent schools who can withstand the pressures of the current economic climate due to economics of scale. The loss of this successful girls' school

is a devastating blow for the whole Park School community; and the further reduction of choice is a

devastating blow for each and every person with a daughter who aspires to single-sex education."



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



Blenheim Schools, the international schools division of UK school operator, Chatsworth Schools, has announced that Chatsworth Schools' current Director of Learning and Teaching, Clemmie

Stewart is to join the group's first international school, Beech Hall School Riyadh from August 2023 as Executive Principal.

Founding Principal, David Ardley will remain at the school as Principal (Boys).



Sibford School Committee have announced the appointment of Rebecca Evans as the 13th Head of Sibford School, Oxfordshire.

Starting in September 2023, at the start of the next academic year, Rebecca will succeed Toby Spence.

Rebecca has spent the last ten years at St John's School in Leatherhead, culminating in her appointment as Acting Head in September last year. A mathematician by background, she went on to gain a Master's degree from the University of Oxford in teacher education.



St Benedict's School, Ealing, has appointed Joe Smith as the new Head from September 2023. He replaces Andrew Johnson, who has led St Benedict's since 2016.

Mr Smith joins St Benedict's from The Oratory School, near Reading, where he has been Head since 2017. Over the course of his career, he has taught at Colfe's School, Greenwich, at Monkton Combe School, near Bath, and was appointed Head of the Oratory Prep School in 2010.



Sidcot School, Somerset, Board of Governors has appointed James Jones as successor to Iain Kilpatrick as Head. Currently serving as Deputy Head at Wycombe Abbey, a role he has

held since 2017, James will join the Sidcot School community from January 2024.

Iain Kilpatrick will take up the position of Executive Headmaster at YK Pao School in Shanghai, China at the start of the new calendar year.



Leweston School has announced the appointment of Mr Richard Thompson as the new Head of Prep with effect from September 2023.

Mr Thompson, who is currently Deputy Head of Old Hall School in Shropshire, will succeed Miss Alanda Phillips who has led the school for the past seven years.

Mr Thompson, who was educated at Salisbury Cathedral School and Canford, holds a BA in Geography and French Language and Literature as well as a PGCE, from Oxford Brookes University. Prior to his current role he was Head of Teaching and Learning and Head of Geography at St Andrew's School, Berkshire. He also spent seven years living and working in Auckland, New Zealand, where he was Head of Geography at Pakuranga College.



Karen Laurie has been appointed Head of Guildford High School, Surrey, from September 2023. She succeeds Fiona Boulton OBE who leaves Guildford High School to continue her role as Head of Independent Schools for United Learning in a full-time capacity.

After studying History at the University of Leeds, Karen began her career in private industry before attaining her teaching qualifications at the Institute of Education, London. She joined Guildford High School in 2003 as a teacher of history, became Deputy Head Pastoral in 2009 and Head of Senior School in September 2022.

## SCIS appoints new chief executive

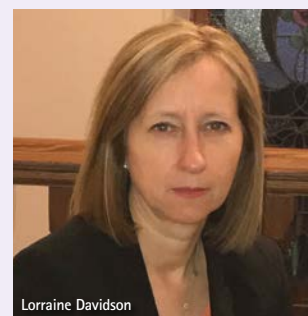
The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) has appointed Lorraine Davidson, Head of Education Strategy at the Scottish Government, as its new Chief Executive.

She will succeed John Edward,

who announced his departure from SCIS in February 2023 after 14 years at the organisation. Lorraine will start the new position in July.

Lorraine was previously the Head of Communications for the Crown

Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, and prior to that Head of Corporate Communications for NHS Health Scotland, and earlier in her career, was a political correspondent for STV, the BBC and The Times.



Lorraine Davidson

## Independent Schools Religious Studies Association (ISRA) Council



Brian Poxon

Mr Brian Poxon, Head of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics at Wells Cathedral School, Somerset, has been nominated onto the National Council of the Independent Schools Religious Studies Association (ISRSA). The ISRSA champions Religious Studies, Theology and Philosophy by supporting and representing teachers, hosting conferences and conducting subject research.

Having taught Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE) for nearly 25 years in both the UK and Australia, as

well as publishing multiple A level revision guides, Brian expressed his interest in the continuing importance of teaching religious literacy when this is not always possible to gain from presentations of religions, which are often misrepresented in the media.

He explained, "The ISRSA strives to support excellence in both resourcing and the teaching of the subject, keeping RPE in a central place in the curriculum, not just because of the inherently valuable content, but because of

the preparation it gives to pupils for life in a multi-religious world. Understanding people for whom religion offers a central shaping framework for life is important, even if that is not the case for oneself. My nomination means that I can contribute to this conversation."

Brian is looking forward to being part of the working party drawing up definitive plans to keep religious education relevant, representative and rigorous in the 21st Century.



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