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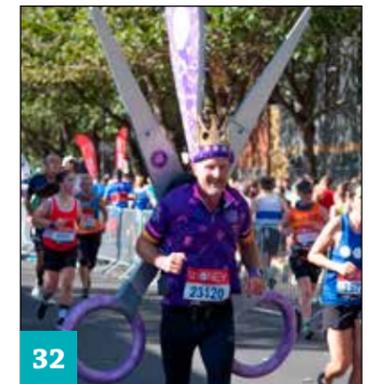
UNIFORM

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SATIPS

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SATIPS offers a breadth of training, networking and supportive opportunities to schools in membership.

It is the ONLY organisation in Britain which is dedicated to the needs of teaching staff in prep schools.

SATIPS is totally focused on all issues facing staff at every level, ranging from NQTs through to Heads of Departments and Senior Leadership Teams. We also aim to cover all age ranges from Nursery to Key Stage 3-4.

SATIPS offers a four-part core of activities and support:

Broadsheets

These are published each term, covering a wide range of curriculum interests as well as specific concerns: e.g. Senior Management, Learning Support and Pre-Prep.

Broadsheet articles are usually written by practising prep school teachers with contributions from leaders in their field. This ensures that whatever issues an article deals with, the reader can be certain that he or she will not only share subject and age-group relevance but also cultural assumptions: e.g. parental expectations of what 'works'. Writing articles for the Broadsheets encourages staff to reflect on their classroom practice and curriculum development.

Broadsheets are edited by prep school teachers who, with proven track records in their field, have taken on the role of subject ambassador.

Further information about the Broadsheets can be found on the website.

Competitions, exhibitions and events for pupils

SATIPS offers a variety of pupil-focused events. Over many years schools have enjoyed entering their pupils in events that have a nationwide attraction with high standards. These events include:

SATIPS Challenge (annual general knowledge quiz)

Harry Paget (Harry.Paget@dragonschool.org)

National Handwriting Competition

For information, please visit SATIPS website: www.satips.org

Poetry Competition

For information, please visit SATIPS website: www.satips.org

SATIPSKI

For information, please visit SATIPS website: www.satips.org

Annual Art Exhibition

Jan Miller (millerj@moretonhall.com) at Moreton Hall

Full details of all these events are at www.satips.org/competitions



Scan for Competitions
Exhibitions and Events



Webinars and INSET

During the Covid pandemic, SATIPS has responded to the needs of schools and teaching staff by offering a series of webinar training courses. These have the added benefits of being far cheaper than conferences, avoiding time and money spent on travelling, negating the needs for cover arrangements, and being easily accessible. They have proven to be so successful that SATIPS will be expanding and increasing the number and variety of webinars provided in the future.

The webinars are primarily directed at classroom practitioners and are specifically arranged to cover a wide range of subjects, interests and topics.

Our trainers and consultants are very carefully selected, for the aim of SATIPS has always been to make use of known experts and specialists.

In addition, the fullest attention is given to feedback given by delegates after every webinar, which helps to shape our programme.

Details of the webinar training programme can be found on the website - <https://satips.org/webinars/>

New courses are added regularly as the programme develops throughout every academic year.

While delegates from all schools are welcomed to 'attend' every webinar, schools that are members of SATIPS receive a substantial discount on course fees.

Webinars

SATIPS has the following webinars currently scheduled:

- **Thursday, 26th Sept** **Managing Difficult Conversations with Parents**
TARGET AUDIENCE: Proprietors, School leaders, business, managers, and teachers.
- **Tuesday, 1st Oct** **Consistently Great Teaching and Learning for ISI – Understanding Great Teaching & how to secure consistency across the Quality of Education Standard**
TARGET AUDIENCE: Teachers of Year 3 and above would benefit from this course, but it is particularly suited to middle and senior leaders.
- **Thursday, 3rd Oct** **Safety and Wellbeing – Giving Learners the Tools to Live Healthy Lives On and Offline Through an Effective RSHE Curriculum**
TARGET AUDIENCE: Heads of schools and departments, PSHE/Wellbeing Leads, Classroom teachers of all age groups – primary and secondary.
- **Monday, 7th Oct** **Prepared for Change: An Update Focused on the Revised EYFS Framework**
TARGET AUDIENCE: Proprietors, School leaders, business, managers, and teachers.
- **Tuesday, 8th Oct** **Mathematics with Craig Barton : Making Cold Call and Turn and Talk as effective as possible**
TARGET AUDIENCE: Mathematics teachers of Year 5 and above.
- **Thursday, 10th Oct** **How To Lead Change Effectively**
TARGET AUDIENCE: Chairs of Governors; Executive leaders, Headteachers and senior leaders.

All of our webinars are run by experts in their field and cover topics of interest to SATIPS members. For further details and booking forms please see www.satips.org/webinars/ New webinars are added throughout the year.

We are proud of what SATIPS offers. With most Officers, Council members and Editors still working in prep schools we believe we understand the demands on staff working in school and are here to support them.

What Next? Joining SATIPS or seeking further information? www.satips.org

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OUTDOOR LEARNING

The Outdoor Learning Broadsheet is an exemplar of the 20 termly subject Broadsheets.

Defining Outdoor Learning

"That sounds cool! So what exactly is that?". This is, more often than not, the response I receive after telling someone what my job is. When I first took on the role of Head of Outdoor Learning two years ago, I wasn't entirely sure how to answer the question myself. Partly because of starting a new role in a different school and not knowing exactly how the role would develop but also because 'outdoor learning' can mean very different things to different people. I have always been passionate about outdoor learning and consider myself incredibly lucky to have a teaching position solely for outdoor learning. One of my primary roles is to promote outdoor learning both within my school and externally in other schools, however, if I struggle to clearly define what outdoor learning actually 'is' then how can I convince others that it should be an important part of a school's curriculum?

The most obvious answer to the question perhaps is that 'outdoor learning' as a concept looks different to each individual, therefore it is difficult to tie down one generic description that covers all bases. Whilst a little frustrating for those who like a clear definition, it is partly this variety of meaning and understanding that makes outdoor learning so appealing for me and many others. As part of my Masters in Education, I wrote a dissertation about widening participation within outdoor learning for currently under represented groups. As part of the introduction, it was suggested that I might like to spend a few hundred words explaining what outdoor learning is in a school context. This opened the metaphorical can of worms and I found myself about two thousand words later realising that some serious editing needed to be done! Throughout

my research, even naming the subject became fraught with difficulty. Is outdoor learning the same as outdoor education? Where does learning outside the classroom come into the structure? If you were so inclined, you could spend a lifetime writing and rewriting definitions of outdoor learning and probably still never be completely satisfied with the result. For me, outdoor learning is simply an activity that takes place outside where some skill or knowledge is learned or developed. This broad definition covers such a vast array of learning and perhaps it sums up how outdoor learning can be so easily incorporated into lessons across the curriculum.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a surge of interest in outdoor learning, both in and outside of schools. In many cases this was as a result of regulations governing ventilation and numbers of people in classroom spaces, but what we are seeing now is the positive impact of time spent learning outdoors being recognised by teachers and leaders. Although sometimes driven by necessity, these outside lessons opened up a new world of opportunity for children, especially where these lessons were seized upon by teachers willing to embrace the possibilities open to them. Many schools are now building on what they started and are developing outdoor learning as part of their curricular and/or co-curricular offering. However, unlike other subjects offered in schools, there is no National or other Curriculum to start with as a base for planning schemes of work. For me personally, this is one of the joys of my job, being able to plan my curriculum exactly how I want it to be. I can be flexible according to weather, special

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OUTDOOR LEARNING

or seasonal events and the curiosity & interests of the children. However, for other teachers, the idea of coming up with an entire curriculum from scratch may not exactly fill them with joy, especially if they do not have a lot of experience in outdoor learning. This is where the variety of outdoor learning really comes in to play though. There is no single 'right' way of teaching outdoor learning in schools, whether you teach it as a discrete lesson once a week or use it as a regular tool within your curriculum lessons, the children are still reaping the benefits of a connection with nature and 'breaking down' of the classroom walls. Recent research has shown just how much children's wellbeing can benefit from increased time outdoors and as teachers I think we would all agree that happy children also learn more effectively.

I am often asked by teachers if outdoor learning is 'Forest School' and vice versa. My answer is sometimes yes and sometimes no. Linking back to the lack of a national curriculum for outdoor learning, many schools see the Forest School Association's Level 3 award as being a benchmark qualification for staff leading outdoor learning sessions in the absence of any other formal qualification, although this is not a national requirement. For lots of teachers and the general public, 'Forest School' has become a byword for outdoor learning, particularly for those with a professional or parental link to the Early Years or pre-prep phases as this is where the provision is most commonly seen. Whilst as a school we do follow many of the principles of forest school, we do not name our outdoor learning lessons as such. Although one of our

outdoor learning team is Forest School trained, I am not personally and it has never been a barrier to providing an ambitious and exciting outdoor learning curriculum. As a training scheme it has been running successfully for a number of years but an absence of a Forest Schools certificate does not prevent you from providing excellent outdoor learning opportunities for your children.

For me, our outdoor learning sessions bring out the best in children. They get to be curious and adventurous and I believe it is the wide ranging nature of outdoor learning, indeed perhaps the lack of definition, that makes outdoor learning so appealing and accessible to all. In an educational landscape which continues to demand more academic success from children, time spent with your friends learning outdoors is not only the antidote to these pressures, but a time to develop and hone the soft skills that we expect children to be using day to day.



OUTDOOR LEARNING

In summary, I don't believe we need to have an agreed definition of what outdoor learning looks like in a school setting. The subject's appeal lies in its variety and flexibility, a subject perhaps unique in its ability to follow the children's and teacher's interests as well as building a vital connection between our children and the natural world.





To assist our member schools, SATIPS has developed a group of 'Preferred Suppliers'. These are companies and organisations that offer high quality services and products. They have been fully reviewed by SATIPS and can be confidently recommended. In essence SATIPS has removed the need for senior members of schools to search for potential suppliers, by fulfilling that requirement.

Crucially the Preferred Suppliers have pledged to offer their very best prices to member schools, more favourable than available to other schools.

Prep School Magazine

'Prep School' is published three times a year. It offers readers in Prep, Primary and Senior schools a broad range of authoritative articles on educational issues.

Editor: Paul Jackson
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Email: lucy.smith@brownsbfs.co.uk

✓ Presentation / Honours Caps For Schools and Clubs

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Email: chris.the1839company@gmail.com
www.the1839company.com

✓ Fire Protection and Equipment

– Smiths Fire

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Email: Bridget@smithsfire.com

✓ Handwriting pens, pencils and educational supplies

– Learn Play Nexus Ltd

Nexus's main contact is Charlie Jones
Tel: 01285 863990
Email: connect@learnplaynexus.com

✓ Housekeeping (Cleaning) Audits

– The CAP Award scheme

The CAP Award's nominated representative is Ian Jackson
Tel: 01858 540200
Email: lan@capaward.co.uk

✓ Legionella Testing & Water Hygiene

– P&W Water Hygiene Ltd.

P&W Water Hygiene Ltd's main contact is Joshua Pollock
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Email: joshuapollock@pwwaterhygieneltd.co.uk

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✓ Printing

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✓ Ski and Educational Travel

– IBT Travel

IBT Travel's main contact is Jim Connor
Tel: 01292 477771
Email: jimc@ibt-travel.com

✓ Sustainable Schools

– Zellar

Zellar's Head of Education is Kevin Osborne
Email: kevin@zellar.com

✓ Wines

– Austin-Bailey Wines

Austin-Bailey Wines' main contact is Alex Bailey
Tel: 07834 646360
Email: alex@austin-bailey.com

To benefit from being members of SATIPS, schools must provide their SATIPS membership number when making contact with any Preferred Supplier.

President's Letter



Richard Tovey MBE

"Focus on the Journey not the Destination."

As I was watching a travel programme recently the words above were stated. I could not help but think this was the perfect summary of the objectives of SATIPS – Support and Training for Teachers in Preparatory Schools. The great strength of this organisation is to encourage and foster communication between subject teachers about all areas of the curriculum to benefit the children we teach and therefore endlessly strive to improve the education that is offered to our pupils.

So in the same breath, we the SATIPS team, continue to review what we do and how we do it. We are always striving to continue to be a Centre of Excellence. As in all walks of life, expectations are constantly changing and we must look forward and ensure we adapt to support the needs of you the classroom teachers. Communication is the critical link and I do urge everyone of you to ensure you keep SATIPS updated with the appropriate changes of personnel in your school so that the information that you and our HQ works so hard to circulate does actually reach the right person!

Thus may I record my sincere thanks to Paul Jackson (Director of Education), Stephen Coverdale (Finance Director), Brenda Marshall, Ben Moir (former Chair), Ellen Manning (Communications Administrator), and David Kendall (Chairman) and the whole Council along with the Broadsheet Editors for all they do and have done. Ben and Ellen are moving on and I thank them for their contributions to the work of SATIPS over the past years. David Kendall has taken over as Chairman and as we welcome our new Council Members on board – Mark Templeman (Deputy Head Brockhurst and Marlston House School), Tim Wheeler MBE (Retired Head Hereford Cathedral Junior School and Stockport Grammar Junior School) and Ian Morris (Chaplain Bishop Stortford College). We will inform you of the roles the new Council will undertake once our review of SATIPS has been completed.

The Chairman would be delighted to hear from you if you have any thoughts about the direction of travel of this great organisation and remember we are here to help and support you so you must tell us what 'you' need from us.

Keep up the good work on behalf of the children you teach and please do enjoy the summer term. It is the culmination of the prep school year and is a good time to reflect and celebrate the successes of the past academic year.

I look forward to working with David and the other members of the team to review our efforts in supporting you all.



Finally, again, thank you to you all for your positive input – and as I said earlier please just check you have 'the correct name on the can!'

Best wishes,
Richard Tovey MBE

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From The Editor



Communication is the very essence of our work in education. As teachers we know how much content to give, when and how to give it, when to raise our voice, when to lower it – and, above all, we know our recipients and how best to get our information across. Years of study and experience go into this – and because every lesson is different, it is no wonder that we enjoy the variety in our chosen career.

It is interesting that SATIPS – “pro magistris, a magistris” cannot exist without communication and yet, for as long as I have been involved

– and long before that – we have never been assured that our messages via Prep School Magazine, The Broad sheets, bulletins and flyers actually reach the people they are intended for. You can imagine our anxiety. All that work involving so many people ends up...where? If this is the case in your school, please let us know as soon as possible and remove our only element of stress at a stroke.

SATIPS is blessed with communication vehicles including Prep School Magazine which reaches schools throughout the country. As a result, we would be delighted to help all our member schools promote their competitions and projects on a regional and national scale. Do get in touch with me to discuss. At the same time, if there are specific webinar topics which we should consider, please do not hesitate to bring them to our attention.

Talking of communication, the Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals are using my story to promote their good works. SATIPS have given me the green light to share this with you so do consider this for your current school charity, do think about bidding for the signed copy of Sir Magdi’s book and do consider joining myself and our Finance Director, Stephen Coverdale, on the fairways (we hope) on the 20th June – which just happens to be my birthday – and which I would not have experienced if it were not for the care I received.

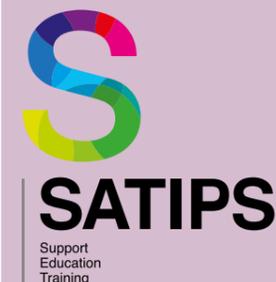
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A SATIPS Publication



Is Private School Worth It?



Simon Weale was state-educated in the centre of London and then studied at Oxford University. He worked in the UK independent sector for thirty years and was Headmaster of Shebbear College, Devon before moving to India in 2020 to become Director of Bishop Cotton School, Shimla – one of the oldest boarding schools in Asia. He has three children who attended a mixture of state and independent schools. His youngest child currently attends an independent boarding school in Suffolk.

In her article, 'Is private school really worth it any more?' (11th January 2024, the Times), Melissa Denes launches into the British Independent school system and expresses her support for the proposed policies of a future Labour administration that aims to withdraw many of the so-called 'financial breaks' currently enjoyed by them. Understandably, the UK Independent sector is deeply concerned about how this will impact them, but the tide is with Labour and they seem in no mood to compromise. Denes makes frequent reference to the 'privilege' of private schooling which rather implies that what most regard as the 'right' to education enjoyed by everyone in the UK is only there if it is education supplied by the state. Denes does not discuss what Labour's plans might be to even out the playing field for those parents who do not have or cannot afford homes in the catchment

areas of the best state schools be they academies, comprehensives or grammars. Nor does she say what we should think of those leading Labour politicians who continue to educate their children in the independent sector, but advocate reforms that will necessarily stop many others availing the same. The leader of the Scottish Labour party, Anas Sarwar, provides an interesting answer for his decision to do this, "I accept the criticism, but that was a decision my wife and I made for what was best for our children". Absolutely and as a multi-millionaire, he will not need to worry too much about likely fee increases.

Denes' article is brazenly one-sided and is a very difficult read for someone who has worked in the sector for thirty years as it is unrecognizable from the reality. It contains most of the cliches that have been used over

time against independent schooling including reference to the movie 'If', a call out to generations of 'spies and sadists', and the use of that old Lord's cricket ground photo from almost one hundred years ago that contrasts young Harrovians with working class boys intrigued by their uniform. Denes suggests that independent schooling is coming unstuck at every level – private schools in the UK, it is implied, can no longer be guaranteed to produce the best grades, or attract places at the best universities, guarantee the best paid jobs or even help make the best connections. Denes' conclusions are that Labour's policies will promote a fairer system, more investment in schools, and a subsequent rise in standards across British education – they should in fact go further. And indeed, given the multiple, perhaps extraordinary, uses that Labours' leaders have suggested

for the proceeds of the independent school tax grab perhaps they will.

I was state-educated, going to the same comprehensive secondary school (it hadn't become an Academy then) as Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting and then to Oxford University. I am proud of my school (we even produced a Nobel Prize winner) and grateful to some amazing teachers like Brian Gostick (History) and also Stewart Thomas and Andy White who encouraged me to follow my passion in cricket by taking us for matches on Saturdays – that is just not a thing now in London state schools. Subsequently I trained as a teacher and have spent over thirty years in the profession, predominantly in independent schools, where, truth be told, the quality of teaching and pastoral care has been far more progressive and effective than that I experienced at one of the world's elite universities. Along the way, I have known thousands of parents who have chosen to invest in their children's private education, and hardly any of them have fitted in to Melissa Denes' easy and cynical stereotypes. Yes, they

can be extremely ambitious, but there is a much more basic human instinct at work – they want the best for their children. They want them to be well-educated, principled, productive, and resilient and they want a school that demonstrates the same values. Many want the broad extra-curricular offer that independent schools still provide, or cutting-edge support for their children's learning difficulties or the chance to learn subjects to A Level and beyond such as Latin or Music which would otherwise have died out. They want their children to be given a range of experiences and to be mentored by staff, as a matter of course, who will invest time and energy into their children as individuals regardless of their ability. These parents reason they are much more likely to find this, though not exclusively, in independent schools. This is why, despite the challenges, most of these parents will continue to make every sacrifice to allow this. As such, they accept reluctantly that they will not benefit from state education even though they are taxed for it and in turn they will have to pay a large amount of taxed income on fees. Soon it is likely to be 20% more.

I have followed the developing debate over the taxation of UK private schools from India where I now work. In Asia, education is considered transformational and UK independent school franchises are very successful here because parents have a higher regard for the values and outcomes of British independent schooling than the Labour Party – this is often in countries where uniformity has already been enforced unsuccessfully in education. Ironically most of the franchises were envisaged as providing funds for bursaries back in the UK – now they might need to support the basic P and L account. I was previously Head of an independent school in Devon. The type of unpretentious school that Denes chooses to skip past with a diverse range of abilities catered for on the school roll. My Bursar in Devon was a working-class boy from the North East who joined the Army at 16 – his view on the proposed reforms is that they are born out of the politics of envy and remarkable economic ignorance and that the impact of these reforms is unlikely to make any tangible difference to the state sector and the children of the UK – it is hard to disagree with him.



Beware the ‘Middle Pupil Syndrome’



Ed Thompson is Deputy Head (Wellbeing) and DSL at Sandroyd Prep School.

For any teachers who have (miraculously) found the time to read this article, I would like you to try something. Pick a class you teach and list, in no particular order, the pupils in your head.

Finished?

If you have spent longer than you should thinking of the final few, do not worry, but perhaps it is because these pupils fall into the ‘Middle Pupil Syndrome’.

I was a middle child growing up and proud of it! Sandwiched between an unruly older brother and a ‘darling’ younger sister I look back on my childhood with many fond memories. It is only since I have worked in education that I reflect on my upbringing from a different perspective, and question whether there is weight to the notion of whether a middle child is often overlooked or even overshadowed, and whether this is an issue which can transpose to education.

Schools have become adept at celebrating success, looking for achievement in every hidden corner of school life. There are now new and innovative ways to praise pupils who are not just the top achievers in academics or extra-curricular areas. At the other end of the scale, when

pupils make the wrong decision, there are a whole host of interventions which are quickly enacted to help support and guide that individual. But let us for a moment spare a thought for those pupils who fall between these two categories, boys and girls who are neither ‘highflyers’, nor pupils in need. These are the pupils who arrive to lessons ready to learn, work consistently, represent the school at sport, accept a support role in the school play and just ‘get on with it’ albeit in a quieter fashion. To quote Susan Cain in her excellent book, ‘Quiet Power’, “Why shouldn’t quiet be strong?”

Are these in fact the hidden heroes of school life?

Coaching sport has been an area of school life from which I still gain significant enjoyment, especially time spent outside on warmer afternoons coaching cricket. I remember one season being a player down for a fixture and rushing through the school corridors that morning on a

sales drive to find a willing volunteer. I found one, eventually, and that individual travelled an hour and half to our match, bowled a couple of overs and didn’t last long at the wicket with bat in hand. However, his enthusiasm never wavered, and he just got on with it. These pupils are the hidden heroes of school life. Looking back, I regret I might not have given enough appreciation to that boy, instead focusing more on the players who took wickets and scored the winning runs. Simply having the awareness that these pupils exist is a major step forward in recognising how pupils contribute to school life in different fashions.

The diversification of prep school offerings has narrowed over recent years with many establishments seeking to offer a similar experience albeit delivered in a slightly different package. What has (and should have) remained a non-negotiable is prioritising pastoral care and putting the pupil experience at the heart of every decision. Indeed, I am often asked by prospective parents or teachers, ‘What makes this school stand-out?’ The answer lies in the people we have inside the building and the value we place on knowing our pupils extremely well. Surely then, we cannot value pupils’ contributions unless we place significant emphasis on getting to know them.

How do we combat the ‘Middle Pupil Syndrome’?

1. Recognise which pupils in each year group may be falling into this category and use this data to inform your pedagogical practice, behaviour strategies in the classroom, or boarding house systems.
2. Always prioritise getting to know your pupils. Organising an afternoon off timetable at the start

of the school year where pupils and staff can form relationships is far more beneficial than at the end of the school year.

3. What makes your pupils tick? Find out, be interested and use this as a ‘hook’ when a confidence boost is required.
4. Ensure tutor sessions are protected and are not bogged down with unnecessary admin tasks. This will build a positive classroom climate where pupils feel safe and confident to speak up.
5. Award schemes can be great tools to find out what hidden interests your pupils take part in, both inside and outside of school.
6. Praise and reward pupils on an individual basis. For quieter individuals, having the bravery

to put their hand up in a group setting can be a huge deal.

Ultimately, great prep schools consist of a rich fabric of pupils who bring different interests, competencies and experiences to the community. The skill is in finding out what these passions are and instilling the confidence in these individuals to be proud of them.

And so, I urge you to think back – as I have done – on those pupils who fell towards the bottom of your class list. Let us make sure the spotlight is regularly shone upon this group of individuals who deserve our attention, deserve to be recognised, encouraged, and celebrated for their contributions to school life, albeit it in a slightly more modest way.



Shoring Up Our Rings of Defence



Guy Ayling, Head Master at Mount Kelly, Tavistock, Devon.

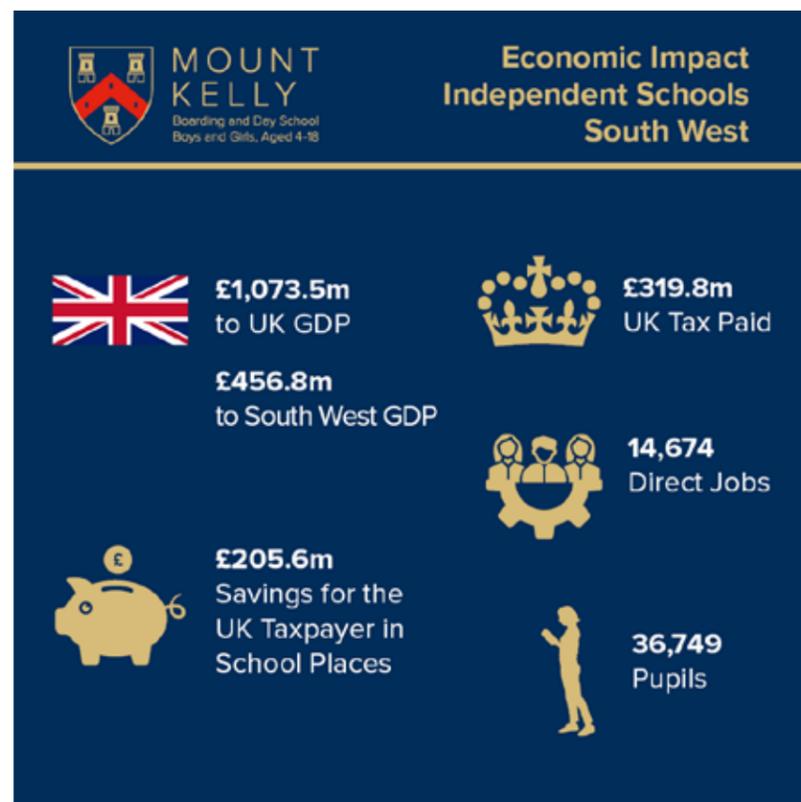
All institutions and organisations need rings of defence to protect them from the various challenges and threats they may face, be they political, economic or societal. The independent sector is no different.

Arguably one of our sector's outermost rings of defence – the parliament at Westminster – is in danger of being breached, with sensible debate around the unintended consequences of tax reform and the benefits of a diverse national educational offering drowned out by election rhetoric and bad mathematics.

Shoring up the sector's more regional rings of defence, and most significantly those of each individual school as rooted in its immediate locality, has never been more important. The graphics give a very clear indication of the positive economic impact that our sector has on the South West, Mount Kelly's region, and more specifically, the

contribution that Mount Kelly makes to the economy of Tavistock and West Devon. The figures have been generated using ISC frameworks and

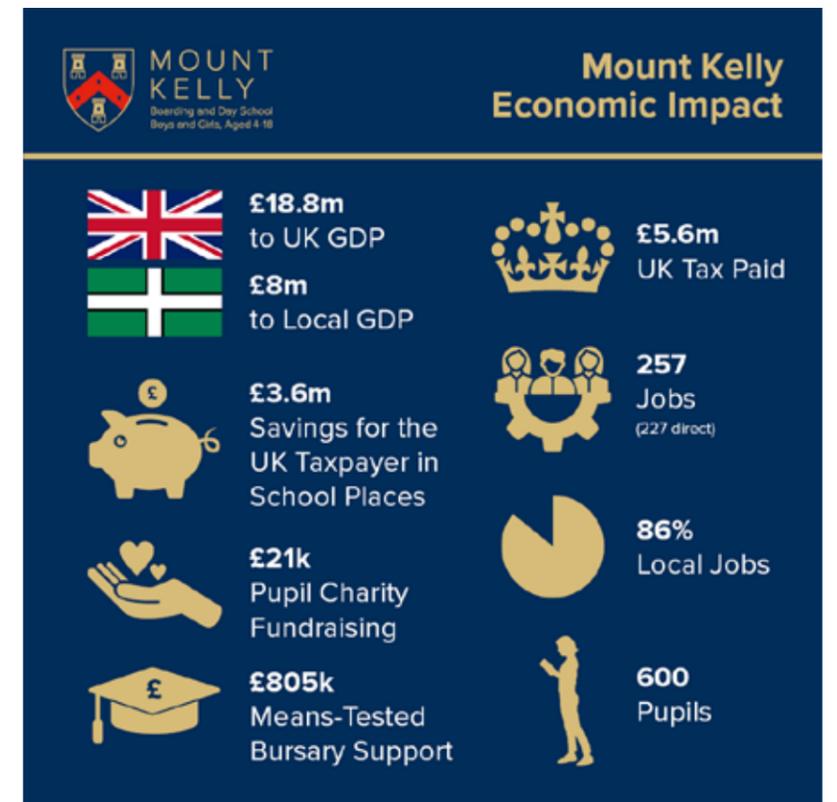
may in fact be very conservative, with Mount Kelly's contribution to local GDP perhaps tripling if all ripple effects are taken into consideration.



It has been revealing how little of this impact has been known in our town, and sharing it with local business people has been helpful for us all; if nothing else Mount Kelly has gained greater credibility, even respect, and our input into exciting discussions around the town's future planning feel now more warmly received. This development alone is community in action; community, 'strength in togetherness', in its root meaning evokes the notion of defensive rings.

Mount Kelly has also undertaken two specific initiatives to support further the Tavistock economy, and in so doing, strengthen one of our innermost rings of defence. The School has supported financially the establishment of the Tavistock Refillery, a community-run zero waste shop that acts also as an information and education hub for all things sustainable. The shop has been a wonderful addition to a town happily dominated by independent retailers. With the high street in mind, the School has also, as part of wider partnerships within our community, implemented a reward card scheme for governors, staff, pupils and their families who are encouraged to spend in town in return for a range of discounts and promotions from local businesses. This then is not economic impact on the grand scale, but one that is more 'real', front and centre in the minds of local people and their businesses.

Economic considerations, however, hit the wallet but not the heart. Without doubt, it is the emotional connections and relationships that our schools have with their villages and towns, built over many years, that are best understood and valued by members of our wider communities; adding immeasurable substance to the most local ring of defence. The pupils at Mount Kelly Prep engage in an impressive programme of community contribution that cements our integration in the town, developing an ethos of service that will define



their lives. Our pupils visit care homes to sing and play their instruments and provide choirs for all sorts of community events; older pupils are involved in community tidy-ups, creating beautiful murals for local charities and guiding visitors around our stunning school on Heritage Days. Mount Kelly's facilities have a six-figure public footfall and the School sponsors local events as well as the town's well-established Choral Society, led by our Director of Music. Joining Tavistock's Remembrance Day service and providing the majority of the musicians for its Remembrance Concert deepens links, especially with the Parish that services our Chaplaincy, and offers powerful symbols of our intention to be fully involved in the town we love. As most schools do, we also encourage our pupils to be fully engaged in local clubs – where several of our staff volunteer – not only to supplement the generous offerings programmed-in to the Mount Kelly experience, but

so that in very real ways they do not stand apart from their community.

These profoundly deep bonds may be strongest in schools such as ours. Many of our schools are in smaller communities (the 'villages and towns' as mentioned above), and often rural ones; a significant number will have rolls under 300, confined in size by geography and demography but providing excellent and non-selective education within reasonable travel distances. It is these schools that might be most valued in their local communities, where public facilities and service-hungry school children are often in shorter supply than in more urbanised areas.

We should be enormously proud of who we are, and what we contribute to our communities: shouting it from the rafters is certainly justified and can only strengthen rings of defence that will help us withstand whatever challenges lie ahead.

Losing Lettie



Maxine Shaw, Head of Danes Hill School, Surrey.

Working with children is the most fulfilling role I could dream of and I have always felt privileged to be doing a job I loved. Of course I get the Sunday evening 'feeling' but, to earn your living working in an environment filled with laughter, love and happiness is an incredible motivator when the alarm goes off on a Monday morning. Last year that changed and the laughter and happiness went out of my life. On a cold Sunday afternoon at the beginning of February, I was in the garden transplanting some seedlings when my phone rang and a police officer informed me that one of my pupils had died.

I know that I have been fortunate in my career. I had never before worked in a school where we had lost a pupil. I had lost parents from the school community and that was utterly tragic, but never a child. I know that I keened when I heard the news. It was a visceral reaction and one I had not experienced before. I had sat with this little girl three days earlier and chatted about her plans for the upcoming half term, the arrival of her new puppy and school life in general. She was a little girl full of energy, with a twinkle in her eye and a wisdom beyond her years. That she was gone was inconceivable. She had headed home on the Friday excited about her weekend.

My first thought was for the child's mother, a colleague in a local school. The police officer informed me that she had also died. I asked about the father and was told he too was dead. There was something in the final statement that finally hit home. The circumstances surrounding Lettie's death were extreme and tragic and, as a school community, we would need to come together to support the pupils, staff and colleagues through what was going to be a difficult and intense period of grief, and acknowledgement of what had happened.

Headship is a difficult job and at times a very lonely one. No one can train you, or prepare you, to deal with the murder of a child and her mother. The best you can do is stumble through the coming hours, days and weeks as you draw deep on your own reserves to support all around you. You find strength and stamina you did not know you had and support from the most unexpected of places. That afternoon I sat and made phone calls, to the Governors, many of whom knew Lettie's mother Emma well, and to the School Leadership Team. You deal with their shock and then grief on an individual level and each call, although no easier, was slightly less hesitant.

The hardest call was to Lettie's class teacher. A young, committed and caring woman who had really gone the extra mile to support Lettie when she joined us in Year 3 the previous September. Fortunately, she was not alone when I told her.

The police involvement meant that we could not share the news with the wider community immediately, but it was clear that there was going to be a media interest as the tragedy became public knowledge and, as a



community we had to be able to move with agility to best support everyone. With the agreement of the Police Liaison Officer, we told the parents of the children in Lettie's class that she had died late on the Sunday. By the time the children arrived at school on the Monday the first reports of the tragedy were on the news channels.

We briefed the staff team first thing, the words seemed to hang in the air. Most had heard something, the disbelief was, in part, a product of the unwillingness to accept such a tragedy could befall one of our families.

The team pulled together, and we all worked as one with the police and Surrey's advisory services to support each other. The Samaritans were on site and counselling was offered. We also had a huge Governor presence morning and afternoon at drop off and pick up as well as in the Staff Common Room.

Epsom College and Croydon High were a constant support as we worked together to help our respective communities.

We have a brilliant School Counsellor who was just joining our team and her

support was invaluable. She offered herself to all of the school community including senior school pupils from Epsom College who had been pupils with us and lost their Headmaster here, at Danes Hill, two years earlier.

On the Monday evening another of the senior team was due to come for supper as both our partners were away. She came and sat with me as I planned three assemblies to talk to the children in each part of the Prep School the next day. I felt as though there was nothing left inside me but together we worked out what to say using the brilliant Winston's Wish resources to help me find the words.

The children responded in very different ways. In each assembly I became tearful. In each assembly I tried to explain what the children needed to know in simple terms, and I gave each group of children the chance to ask questions. They were heartbreaking.

'Was it dark?' 'Was she on her own?' 'Was she scared?' 'Why?'

In each assembly I talked about the power of the hug and invited everyone to hug each other if they wanted to. It was an incredibly powerful thing

to do. Some children sobbed, others giggled, others were silent. The power of touch was, for most, a huge comfort. I answered every question honestly, not avoiding the truth, although there was little 'knowledge' at this point and I could say this.

We have an area hidden from the outside world called the Fountain, which has three olive trees growing on it. We placed flowers and tributes here and each class hung a small angel from the branches of a tree. We welcomed parents and past pupils into school and supported them as best we could. As the news came out we managed to avoid scrutiny, partly thanks to the ISC who asked the press to give us space and peace. It was much appreciated.

Four days later we started our half term break, as the press speculation continued and more details of the tragedy started to emerge.

When we returned, the pain was raw and yet for the children they were doing what Winston's Wish had said, jumping in and out of their puddles of grief. We would see them going about their school lives as if nothing had happened and then, at times, there

would be grief which manifested as sadness, anxiety or poor behaviour. Our counsellor wrote a bespoke programme to support them called 'Circles' which we are happy to make available to any other school who would like to use it. The staff also struggled through, each accessing the support we were offering in the way that suited them best.

Emma's parents and sister visited us. We had left all of Lettie's belongings where they had been. Her coat peg was still labelled and her books were in her desk. They were broken human beings. Grampa reached out and touched her picture in the classroom. We were all broken.

The ongoing scrutiny made it hard. We were never sure what information would have been released and how it would have affected the community.

I drove to the private funeral in Lincoln with Lettie's class teacher and we held each other's hands in iron grasps as the service started. The crematorium was packed. The service

was truly beautiful. Emma's sister had written and recorded a song which was hauntingly beautiful and showed that they really were sisters whose hearts had beaten together. Emma's Uncle read a letter written by her Grandparents to Lettie. We wept.

The process takes time. I know that. The support from the Local Authority was helpful, the police liaison was excellent, Reverend Canon Andrew Havilland, the Chaplain at Epsom College is a man with a depth of kindness, compassion and strength that is rare. He brought comfort whenever our paths crossed.

On a beautiful sunny day the memorial was held. Emma's sister played and sang, no recording this time. I read the letter to Lettie.

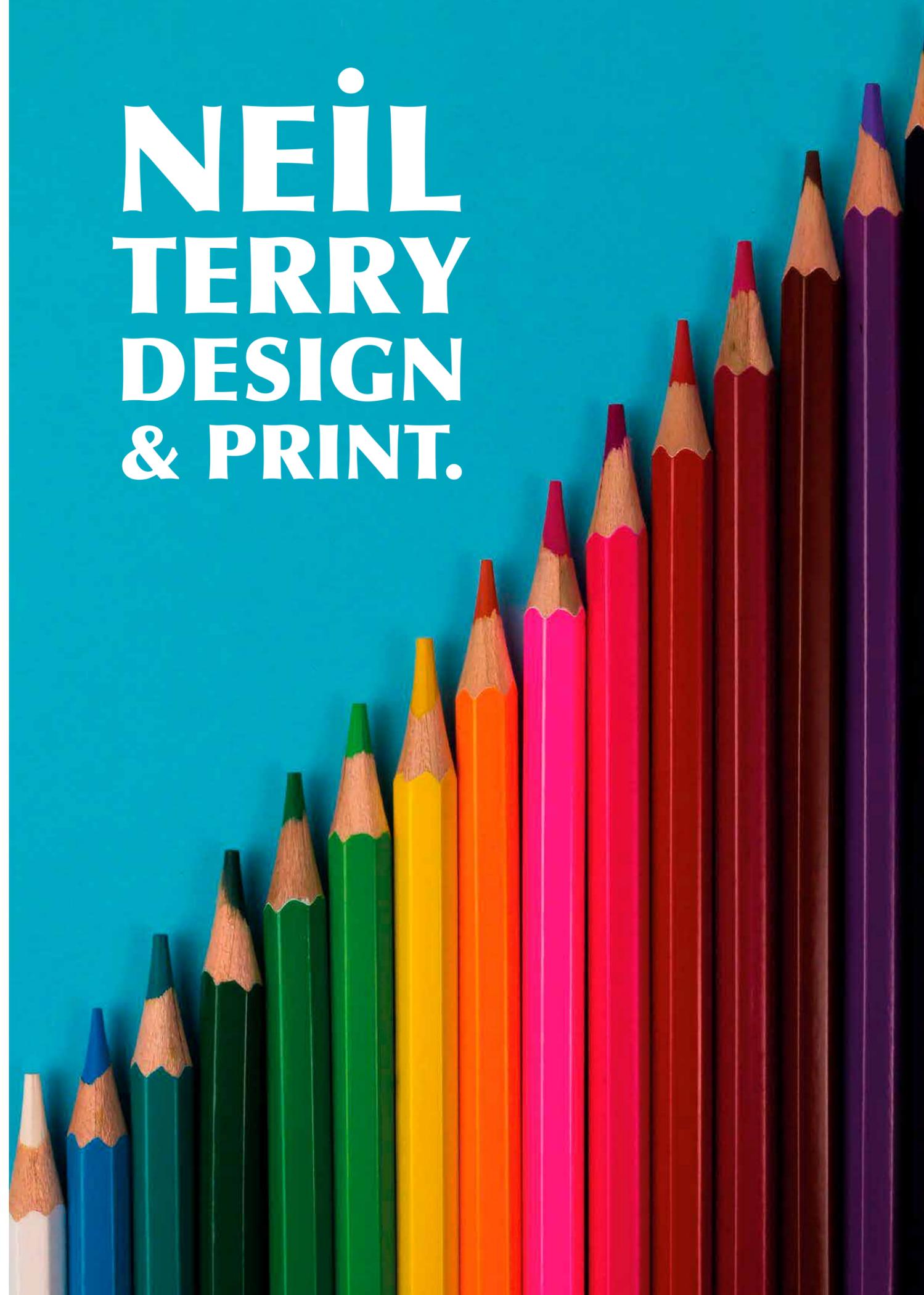
At school we planted 10,000 bulbs in Lettie's memory. I ran a half marathon for Winston's Wish with a group of local Heads and friends and we raised over £25,000. There is no right way to lead a school community through such tragedy.

The seeds I was planting on that day, February 5th were Larkspur. They nearly all germinated and I had around 100 plants in my garden. The last flower was still dancing in the wind in November. They grew where I had planted them but also appeared in gravel edging around the paving. I harvested the seed and on the same Sunday this year I planted them once again, not just in pots but in nooks and crannies. They are labelled as Lettie's Larkspur and I know I will have them in my garden for as long as I am able to look after one.

NEIL TERRY DESIGN & PRINT.



NEIL TERRY DESIGN & PRINT.



Rediscovering Reading



Dan Reeve, Undermaster, Winchester College.

Reflecting on getting back into a childhood passion and suggestions for encouraging pupils and teachers to do the same.

“So please, oh please, we beg, we pray,
Go throw your TV set away,
And in its place you can install,
A lovely bookshelf on the wall.”

Roald Dahl
– *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

Reading has been around for millennia, although for much of that time its secret was hidden from the majority, who lacked the ability to understand the written word. Even in the ancient Greek and Roman empires, literacy remained a privilege of the elite, but for the last few centuries at least it has been more widely accessible. The printing press was a game-changing invention in the 15th century, then reading rates were further enhanced by society's dedication to public literacy in the sweeping education reforms of the 18th and 19th centuries. By the mid-20th century, the number of people avidly reading books for pleasure reached its pinnacle. Then came the television, entering increasing numbers of homes through the 1950s, and by the 1960s, 75% of British homes had one. Leisure became increasingly centred around television and through the second half of the 20th century reading suffered a desperate decline and literacy began to slow. Against this backdrop, Roald Dahl's 1964 quote “so please, oh please...” from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was poignant indeed, and written by a man who championed reading, doing so much

to inspire it in the young, against this fierce technological competition.

But there may be some light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, as research suggests that reading in the 21st century is arguably on the rise, although perhaps not in the way we might hope. Adults and children alike now spend much of their time looking at screens, reading online content, and communicating through the written word of email or text messages. The amount of reading taking place has in one sense increased (with oral communication taking what may be a dangerous backseat), but certainly the amount of books being read continues to decline. Digital messages and social media posts are also typically composed from drastically reduced vocabularies, with misspellings, poor punctuation, a lack of grammar and a host of abbreviated or entirely made-up words. Certainly not the ideal proving ground to develop young people's literacy.

Research into reading for pleasure widely documents its value to children's development, both for educational purposes as well as for personal growth. It has been linked

to academic attainment, future career success, positive emotional and social consequences, and improved mental health. Schools, libraries and charities invest heavily in promoting reading, and events such as World Book Day are widely celebrated. But the forces of television, the internet, and social media are strong, and these forces seem to grow in influence as children become teenagers, and then young adults.

One of my early childhood memories is of excitedly reading in bed with my father. He would sit with me and read the books I loved over and over again. A scene that many parents will no doubt resonate with and one I re-enact with my two young boys now (although, when we progress beyond *Peppa Pig*, I will feel great joy). I remember one evening from my childhood in particular, when following some silliness on my part, I was warned by my father that he would not be able to keep reading with me if I were not more sensible. Unfortunately, my misbehaviour continued and moments later I vividly remember standing at the top of the stairs in tears, book in hand, shouting after my father, begging him to come back and finish the story. He'd followed through on the threat, as parents have to do sometimes, and my sadness at not being able to finish the story was palpable.

Fast-forward 10 to 15 years and I might instead have cried if you had tried to make me read a book! Like so many teenagers and young adults, it had fallen out of favour with me. I had more interesting things to do, or so I thought. Perhaps I managed to read two or three books a year, usually biographies of sportspersons I admired, almost never a novel, and certainly nothing you could class as literature.

During my first few years in the teaching profession, it would be a lie to say that the voracity of my reading was a whole lot better, despite working in schools with excellent



The Fellows' Library – Winchester College: home to over 10,000 rare books and manuscripts, established in the early 15th century. Pupils meet these resources in their studies, including a first Edition of Newton's Principia, Shakespeare's First Folio, and a songbook which once belonged to Elizabeth I.

reading initiatives which I regularly had to champion to tutees, rather hypocritically, perhaps. However, a few years ago, a switch was flicked. A colleague in a previous school was widely known for her insatiable appetite for reading (yes, she was an English teacher) and I learned that she regularly read over 100 books a year (yes, actual books). How did she know this? She kept a list, of course. It had never occurred to me that someone would keep a list of the titles they read, and it seemed unimaginable that someone could read such a quantity of books, unless perhaps they were reading some of my children's pop-up-books (she assures me she

wasn't). Not long after learning of her impressive exploits, I was traveling in India, and I completed a book! This was helped by lots of time spent on (or waiting for) various forms of transport, without easy access to the internet or electronic devices. It was early January. So I opened the Notes app on my phone, wrote the title 'Books read this year' and listed the title and author next to the number one. Before commencing what would be a 20 hour journey back to the UK, I purchased a novel at the airport and by the time we'd landed in Heathrow, I'd finished it. Two down. I'm not one to shy away from a challenge, and aiming for a book a month that year

would have been an achievement, based on my form, but perhaps not a challenge – it was early January and I was on two after all. So I settled on a target of reading 52 books.

Of course I was soon back at work and my early January progress stalled. But I was Head of Year 8 at the time and a couple of weeks later I picked up a copy of the book my year group were reading in English (*The Woman in Black*, by Susan Hill), which had been abandoned in my classroom by a disgruntled pupil. I had the idea that if I read it, I could speak to my pupils about it. It's quite a short novel and soon I was on three. I had always been a fan of the James Bond films growing up, but I'd never read one of Fleming's books. A colleague lent me the boxset of them all, so I got to work, squeezing

the occasional non-fiction title in between, such as Michael Palin's travel book *Around the World in 80 Days*. Then, the world began to lock down. It was early 2020. I visited my school's library the day before we closed the doors and borrowed a selection. I tried some Agatha Christie for the first time, among other things. Lockdown certainly helped give me more time and headspace to develop a reading habit, and by the time I moved to Winchester that summer, my list was well into the 30s for the year, with a few months left.

Winchester is an inspiring school, with one of the most impressive rare book collections in the world and a stunning pupil library which rivals the collections of some universities. The pupils are academically curious and

this environment further elevated my reading game. I began to thread some classic literature into my pile of books, as well as occasional philosophical, scientific and political writings. We dine each lunchtime with pupils in their boarding houses and deliver a short reading known as *preces* one evening each week. This wider reading gave me interesting content for these conversations and presentations. While talking to pupils I would ask them what books they enjoyed and I rounded off 2020 with my 52nd book of the year, one boy's favourite book, that he kindly lent me over the Christmas break – J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

The following year I managed another 50 titles, with even greater diversity, including classics such

as F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. I read some Hemmingway, some Wells, more Christie, and Jules Verne. I read contemporary novels by Lee Child, James Patterson, Mick Herron and William Boyd. I read non-fiction about history, war, sport, business and human endeavour.

I dropped off the pace over the next two years, with increased work responsibilities, completing a masters degree and having two young boys to contend with. I managed only 20 titles in 2022 and a mere 12 books last year. But I am back with a vengeance in 2024, having read 21 titles by early April. I've explored history with Anthony Beevor, Stephen E. Ambrose and Ben Macintyre, and I recently read my first John le Carré novel. I have a stack of titles by my bed that I am excited to start. So the real question, as I reflect on this journey, is what have I learned along the way that might help others to develop their reading too?

1. Have at least two or three books on the go at once. In fact I sometimes have five or six. At one point in time, I would have felt it impossible to do this, but I realised that, just in the way people may be watching multiple TV series at once, it's possible to have different books on the go. I wouldn't recommend reading, for example, several murder mysteries at once, or it really will become a mystery. But a couple of different novels and a couple of different non-fiction books allows you to vary what you read based on your mood. When you're feeling sluggish towards one, pick up another.
2. Set a target. Especially if, like me, you are motivated by a challenge. It may need to be a

fairly ambitious target (but still achievable) to peak your interest. The sense of achievement allows you to take pride in reading and makes it seem like more than just a leisure activity.

3. Keep a record. I use the Notes app on my phone, some people use social media apps (which also allow you to share your progress with friends, if that's your cup of tea). But I believe that some form of written record helps cement the sense of achievement, and can be fun to look back on over time.
4. Seek variety. I've read things in recent years I never thought I would be interested in. By forcing myself outside my comfort zone, I've learned so much more about the world and about myself.
5. Take recommendations from others. I've followed the recommendations of friends, colleagues and pupils and this has allowed me to share conversations with them about what we have read. In this way, the individual activity of reading becomes social too. I know some people swear by book clubs, although I haven't tried this myself.
6. Consider alternative formats such as audiobooks or a kindle. Books are not always practical to carry around and plenty of people use a kindle. I'm afraid I just like the feel of physical book in my hand too much. But over the last couple of years I have ventured into the world of audiobooks and this has undoubtedly helped me to meet my targets. It brings the world of reading to places that I've never associated it with before: on a long solo car journey being an obvious one, but listening while doing the washing up has turned what was once a toil into an unexpected pleasure and haven from the rigours of the day.

7. Start with what you like. If it's sports biographies or action novels, then so be it. My chosen subject matter became more varied over time, but only once I felt ready to challenge myself with different genres and work written across differing time periods. That's not how I started.

I've got a few more books to go this year and I hope many more years of reading pleasure ahead of me. So, any recommendations?

Moberly Library – Winchester College. This library (one of several in the College) occupies a beautifully beamed 14th century building which was formally the school brewery and Headmaster's ballroom. It is home to over 30,00 titles.



No Pain, No Gain



Jason Whiskerd is the longstanding Headmaster at Brentwood Preparatory School and an advisory board member for IAPS. He is also a PGCE tutor and visiting lecturer for the University of Buckingham and a regular contributor to the educational press.

I may be wrong, but I suspect that there aren't many people of a certain age who haven't read (or are at least aware of) the brilliant and timeless children's book 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' by Michael Rosen. A family decides to go looking for a bear, and declares – 'we're not scared', but they then face a series of obstacles, including a river, a snowstorm and a muddy swamp. Suddenly they do seem a little more scared. Millions of people remember it for a multitude of personal reasons including the wonderful illustrations, the relentless repetition, the rose-tinted reminder of our own childhoods and the sheer joy of empathising with a family who are bonded

by adversity. This clever story shows that even very young children can engage with the idea that it is not always possible to avoid something that is difficult. This is particularly relevant for a range of situations, including changes at home, and struggles at school.

Primarily, I remember it for the following lines, 'You can't go under it, you can't go over it. You've got to go through it'. For me, these iconic and often repeated lines are a wonderful metaphor for life itself and the many ups and downs of the journey we all take in a life well lived. The perennial, and well documented, issue of actively building pupil resilience is never too far away in schools, and I was struck by this theme in a recent article by the wonderful writer and social commentator, Matthew Syed.

In the article, Syed used the metaphor of lifting free weights in the gym to the point of pain as being the same as allowing children to make mistakes. However, standing back and allowing this to occur can prove to

be extremely challenging for parents who perhaps feel the need to make things right in the confusion of the post-Covid landscape. Syed argues that lifting weights to the extent that it causes pain actually produces the best long term fitness and physique. This is almost literally the very embodiment of the 'no pain, no gain' mantra. The body's stress response is to fix the pain and, almost against all odds, it almost always manages to achieve this result.

What has this got to do with the broader issue of parenting and day-to-day life within our schools? Well, protecting the body from stress can also undermine its ability to perform the self-repair required for greater resilience, robustness and progress. If we compare this to the parent or school that does not allow (or indeed even plan for) a child to be placed in a stressful or challenging situation, then they too will never gain the resilience and toughness that will allow them not only to cope, but actually get stronger through lived experiences that they (and probably their parents) would not necessarily have chosen for them.

On a very serious and alarming note, according to the Office for National Statistics, suicide rates amongst children under 15 years of age have

grown exponentially, and Matthew Syed argues that parents' wish to protect and possibly be 'overly kind' has, in effect, resulted in more harm than good, even though it might be totally understandable. This is a very difficult concept for any parent or educator to contemplate, as it makes us question our trusted methods and beliefs, whether that be in the realms of parenting, pedagogy or pastoral care. Such a bitter pill to swallow rarely tastes good but, on this occasion, the alternative is a great deal worse.

I may be imagining this but when I was a child, you often heard the phrase 'You have to be cruel to be kind'. In my view, it is a particularly unpleasant and unfortunate phrase which was originally penned by Shakespeare in 'Hamlet' and became embedded into common parlance during the Victorian era, where such references and idioms often became a maxim for how people should live their lives. Despite my dislike for the phrase, I can see why it came to be so popular, and I can understand the thinking behind the perceived benefits of using cruelty or being unsupportive in the short term for supposed great benefits in the longer term.

To be absolutely clear, I would never choose to be cruel, and would undoubtedly always choose kindness over almost any other human attribute. I would suspect that every school leader and those who work in our institutions would feel the same way. However, Matthew Syed's view should not be ignored; as he states, '... those trying to help are often hurting us the most'.

Perhaps people, like muscles, flourish as a consequence of self-repair and overcoming true adversity. Perhaps only by being pushed beyond our comfort zone can we truly gain growth, robustness and resilience.



Impossible Health?



Dr Julia Jones; neuroscientist and bestselling author.

Health is hard. We're told it's easy, but it isn't. Not in the modern society we now live in. On paper the science suggests they are fool-proof fixes but five decades of immense diet and fitness trends have failed. As their revenues grew over the years, so did average waistline size and the scale of the health crisis. These approaches have just been Band-Aids, providing only temporary and limited benefits as we dip in and out of these various fads during our hectic lives. They require too much ongoing effort and/or cost to be sustained. The current crop of wellness trends, although well intentioned, seem no different when measured by those effort and cost variables. Why

haven't all these approaches fixed the underlying problem? Are we kidding ourselves? Is maintaining lifelong good health in modern society now actually perhaps unachievable (and unaffordable) for most people due to our evolutionary biology, perpetual state of overwhelm, and the 'system' we now exist in? Why are we still championing these failed conventional models as 'best practice' and continuing to recommend them?

Generations of school children have been exposed to the physical education we believe is good for them. It hasn't worked. In fact, for many, it has served the opposite purpose, seemingly putting many of them off activity for life.

As a sport and exercise scientist working in the health and fitness sector for decades, I didn't want

to accept that maybe we were wrong. However, the facts are now undeniable. As I write this, I'm reading the new obesity statistics published by The Lancet and the World Health Organisation ahead of World Obesity Day. More than 1 billion people are now living with obesity globally. This puts them at increased risk of 32 chronic health conditions. It isn't just an adult problem. The rapidly declining state of children's mental and physical health isn't just alarming, it's terrifying. How much longer are we going to keep promoting the health approaches that don't work?

It's time for an urgent rethink. Something new needs to happen. It's time to learn from the past experiences and adjust our recommendations. I began examining the failure of the diet and fitness industry five years ago. It shocked me. I stopped giving the diet and fitness advice I'd been recommending for decades. I looked at the science differently. I dived back into academia, studying applied neuroscience at King's College London, nutrition science at Stanford, and genetic science at Cambridge. This enabled me to examine the problem through multiple lenses. Health is complex. Our brains and bodies are incredible.

They were designed to exist in a world that we no longer live in.

Our ancient biology evolved to store fuel. This was necessary because fuel sources weren't guaranteed. Sometimes we had to exist for long periods before we found more food. Consequently, to ensure our survival we adapted over time to become incredibly efficient at storing fat. There are more than 1,000 genes that play a role in fat storage. The appetite mechanisms controlled by our brain are highly tuned to make us seek sugars and fats because those are the nutrients that our cells convert to produce energy. This sophisticated system is now absolutely sabotaged by our modern society and it's not going to evolve to cope in our lifetime or our children's. It's driving us to seek and store the once scarce nutrients that now surround us every day in the modern world. The biological system that evolved to ensure our survival is now slowly killing us because of our hyper-palatable ultra-processed foods, and convenience culture.

So, what do we do now? Well, there are several health options that are emerging as perhaps the new 'best practice' in the preventative health field. Some are not what we would like to admit are necessary. For example, the arrival of new weight loss drugs to help those living with obesity provides a lifeline for those who need it. Other 'longevity' drugs are also being designed to keep chronic cellular inflammation in check and slow our biological ageing rate. Legislation is probably also going to be needed to help improve the food and drink products we are exposed to. Functional foods are another rising star in the health sector. The UK government is funding innovation in this area to help put more 'wellness' into the existing foods and drinks we consume. Because asking us to eat more fruits and vegetables has failed.

In 2023, I participated in a government funded Food Innovation Accelerator. I developed a new prebiotic coffee as a result. This emerged from my habit-hacking wellness programme. This new drink helps coffee drinkers get more prebiotic fibre and essential vitamins and minerals in their daily diet, simply through their existing coffee drinking habit. It's a low effort and low-cost wellness 'hack'.

It's this 'health hacking' approach that has given me hope that we can turn around the health crisis. When we know that most people cannot sustain health practices that require ongoing effort and/or cost, the answer is to offer alternatives that are effortless and affordable. I now teach just a handful of simple habit hacks because even just embedding a few of those into a person's daily routine can significantly improve their future health outcome. Importantly, these are simple things that we can also teach the next generations from a very young age.

Here are my three go-to "habit-hacks"

1. Step outside as early as possible in the morning

Our ancient sleep circuitry (the Circadian system) evolved to be regulated by daylight. This means that for this system to work properly we have to be in natural daylight in the morning. This enables the timer to release our sleep hormone, melatonin, in the evening to send us to sleep. Sleep is an absolutely vital pillar of health.

2. Eat within an 8-10 hour window (adults)

We were not designed to be eating across such a long eating window. Many people are eating early breakfast, then lunch, and then dinner in the evening. This means we spend almost all of a 24-hour day digesting the items we have consumed. Consequently, the "housekeeping" pathways in our cells do not have a chance to activate to clear the debris. Over time this cumulative effect is known to drive the chronic inflammation at the heart of most chronic diseases. We should eat well but in a shorter time period. This is well documented for adults but the research regarding children is limited. So, an alternative approach for younger individuals would be to restrict sugars.

3. Slow your breathing

We are breathing too fast and too shallow. At least once a day think about slowing down your breath to around 6-breaths-per-minute to engage the relaxation effect of the parasympathic nervous system. If you can also extend your exhales that's even better. Check out my MusicHacks tracks on Spotify and Apple Music to practice this technique. Making this simple breathing hack a part of your daily routine can help keep stress chemicals in check. Let's teach all children to adopt slow breathing. It's a superpower that will continue to serve them through their whole life.

For more information about this low effort, affordable, preventative health approach visit www.drjuliajones.com

Charities in Need of Your Support



Northampton Hope Centre

Northampton Hope Centre is a homelessness and hardship charity that has been supporting people for 50 years. We have a homeless centre where we provide immediate crisis support such as warm clothing, blankets, hot food and drinks. Our goal is to find the reason behind someone's situation so our service extends to a wide and varied support infrastructure including debt advice, housing support, drug and alcohol misuse and mental health support, as well as workshops to provide meaningful activity and engagement. All working to help restore lives. We rely on public donations and fundraising to maintain the work we do.

Contact details: office@northamptonhopecentre.org.uk



Some children and young people, with a life-limiting condition, may need to be away from their education setting for long periods of time, often being extremely isolated through disability and/or illness. Thomas's Fund was set up, in 2007 (by Jan Hall and Lucy Smith) to provide Music Therapy at home; in hospital (or other setting) within Northamptonshire. Named after Thomas Smith, who died aged 10, and also celebrating his brother Harry, who both loved their Music Therapy sessions. Harry was an ambassador for the Fund.

Thomas's Fund is run by a small group of volunteers but we have an excellent team of trained Music Therapists, paid to work part-time for us. Music Therapy provides an emotional and creative outlet through which to communicate where words are not possible or not enough. It can help development socially, emotionally and physically alongside enabling self-expression, sometimes even providing respite from pain or anxiety. Sessions are interactive: the child/young person can express themselves through sound (vocal and instrumental), words, silence and gesture.

Our Music Therapists usually need to travel throughout the County, so fuel prices are a key outlay within our fundraising, alongside Therapist wages and resources. This makes a high total to raise yearly so, alongside our loyal supporters, we are always on the lookout for new grants, sponsors, fundraising ideas and volunteers. Presently we require £100,000 per year to be able to continue this work.

Since its inception, the Fund has been very grateful for the wonderful support of individuals and groups (particularly across Northamptonshire) and the support of local businesses. We have been thrilled to be featured on BBC's Children in Need several times.

If you know anyone who would benefit from our service; are interested in any aspect of Thomas's Fund or feel that you can support us in any way, you can find more information on our website: www.thomassfund.org or our Facebook Page (**Friends of Thomas's Fund**). You can also contact me (Lucy Smith) on **07854921854** / lucy.smith@thomassfund.org



1.2million children helped to stay safe from abuse by children's charity programme.

The NSPCC is revealing that last year (April 2022 to March 23) its **Speak out Stay safe** programme was delivered to more than 1.2 million children across 5,332 schools in the UK.

The publication of this data comes as the children's charity rolls out a refreshed version of the programme, including a new promotional video.

Speak out Stay safe, which has been running since 2011, aims to help primary school children understand abuse in an age-appropriate way, as well as teach them where to ask for help.

The NSPCC believes empowering children with this knowledge is vital as on average two children in a primary school class have experienced abuse or neglect.

Educating children on abuse and neglect helps them to recognise situations or signs which will enable them to share their concerns with a safe adult.

The updated version of **Speak out Stay safe**, which is available to all UK primary schools, includes a range of resources – which varies depending on the age of the children. Schools can benefit from virtual assemblies, lesson plans and face-to-face workshops with NSPCC trained volunteers.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, **Speak out Stay safe** was delivered in more than 90% of all primary schools across the UK. This has been affected as a result of the lockdown and using its refreshed service model, the children's charity is ambitious to rebuild numbers and reach more children.

Caroline, a volunteer with the NSPCC, said: "When my son was younger, his behaviour suddenly began to deteriorate. He became aggressive and had really low self-esteem and we couldn't understand what was wrong. After being involved in a *Speak out Stay safe* assembly, he came home and disclosed to me that he had been sexually abused by a 13-year-old family friend when he was staying away from home.

"If it hadn't been for that assembly, I honestly think the abuse would still be happening. He was able to see clearly what was right and wrong and then use the appropriate words to tell me that he wanted the abuse to stop. It's so important the *Speak out Stay safe* assemblies continue and help to keep children, like Luke*, safe from abuse."

Strategic Service Manager for Schools, Janet Hinton said: "At the NSPCC, we strive to do all we can to safeguard children, and we believe that helping children understand what abuse is and where they can turn for help is an essential part of that.

"This is why we are encouraging primary schools across the UK to sign up to our refreshed *Speak out Stay safe* programme.

"For many children, we know that they might not be aware that they are experiencing abuse, and some might be scared about speaking out in fear of repercussions.

"Through *Speak out Stay safe* we aim to let children know that abuse is never a child's fault and that there are people who can help them."

The programme is available in English, Welsh and incorporating British Sign Language and there is also a version of the programme for children with additional needs and disabilities.

To sign up to *Speak out Stay safe* you can visit <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/services/speak-out-stay-safe/>

Adults concerned about a child can contact the NSPCC Helpline seven days a week on

0808 800 5000

or email help@nspcc.org.uk

Children can call Childline on

0800 11 11

or visit www.childline.org.uk



Tim Wheeler is running three marathons in five weeks dressed as his alter ego, Scissorman, to raise funds for and awareness of the Little Princess Trust. You can read more at <https://www.littleprincesses.org.uk/news/scissorman-takes-on-manchester-marathon> and donate on his Justgiving page <https://www.justgiving.com/page/scissorman-aka-tim-wheeler-1700689821048>

“My motivation is the incredible work which the Little Princess Trust does – the charity has now provided more than 15,000 wigs.”



The Matt Hampson Foundation inspires and supports young people seriously injured through sport.

Matt Hampson is former England U21 and Leicester Tigers Prop. A collapsed scrum cost him his career, his mobility and at first his sense of self.

But with an elite athlete’s dedication and the support of professionals, friends and family, he fought his way back, redefined his purpose and established a Foundation that has helped more than a thousand people to Get Busy Living.

Develop the skills to Lead

- The role of the leader
- Communication styles
- Influencing skills
- Skilled conversationalist
- Effective feedback
- Healthy transactions at work
- Understanding ego threats
- Building trust effectively

Drive diversity and inclusion

- Psychological safety
- ED&I what is it and where it shows up
- Unconscious bias
- Bringing exclusion & inclusion to life
- Microaggressions
- Privilege

Thrive under pressure

- Sustaining and renewing physical energy
- Having a clear sense of purpose and direction
- Sustaining self-belief
- Having an open and optimistic Get Busy Living mindset
- Building open and trusting relationships

Selecting us as a **chosen charity** means our team can come to your school and deliver fun, interactive and experiential activities that can focus on any of the above tailored to specific year groups.

OUR TEAM

UNIQUELY QUALIFIED | HIGHLY EXPERIENCED | PERFORMANCE EXPERTISE

Claire Drury
Leadership & Teams Specialist

Paul Mattin
Polar Explorer & Royal Marines Mountain Leader

Dan Hipkiss
Former England Rugby Player

Gen Moody
Diversity & Inclusion Specialist

Geordan Murphy
Former Ireland & British Lions Rugby Player

Our experts draw on the lessons of their international sporting, military careers and life as a disabled person, making their stories relatable and memorable.

Under the international spotlight they have learned to manage extraordinary pressure, work effectively as part of a team and consistently deliver to the highest standards.



Equipped to Lead



Rachel Johnson has been the CEO of PiXL since the start of 2020, leading their network of 2500 schools. The aim is to work with school leaders to improve the life chances and outcomes of young people through equipping and supporting leaders, an aim that Rachel is passionate about and totally committed to.

I remember when I took on my first school leadership position; I had been a good teacher and so was promoted to being the Head of Department, I assume people thought that a good teacher would convert to being a good leader. I was excited about the chance to lead others and move things forward in my department but there was one problem, I didn't know how. It wasn't pedagogical knowledge that was the challenge, nor understanding assessment or the exam system, nor planning or writing the curriculum, I felt well prepared for that through excellent training and evidence and research. It was the human part of leadership, the unspoken things that I had not been trained on. I relied on having good relationships and the art of persuasion (which worked for me to some extent) but when it came to trying to move things forward, I found myself confused. How was the best way to have a challenging conversation? How do you set expectations and then hold people to them? How do you have

boundaries so that you don't burn yourself out? How do you create buy in and momentum so that people want to follow? Over the next 20 years, I was determined to find the best models, tools and approaches to help with the things that are so crucial but often not made explicit.

There are three areas that I think we need to understand more about if we are going to lead well.

1) How to have crucial conversations

Having crucial conversations is such an important part of leadership. They are crucial in allowing people to grow and in holding high expectations, but many a leader avoids them, works around them or refuses to have them because these conversations feel awkward. Sometimes we are so nervous that what we say isn't clear and we confuse the person we are speaking to. One of the best models I have ever found for structuring a challenging conversation is from Susan Scott who wrote *Fierce Leadership* and *Fierce Conversations*. In her model, she recommends saying

what needs to be said in 60 seconds and following set stages. These are:

- Name the issue.
- Select a specific example.
- Describe your emotions about this issue.
- Clarify what is at stake: Why is this important?
- Identify your contribution to this problem. Even if we feel we have done nothing wrong, we will have contributed and it is important to acknowledge that here.
- Indicate your wish to resolve the issue.
- Invite the person to respond. Steps 1-6 take approximately 60 seconds. In this last phase of the conversation, we listen to what they have to say, without interruption and without defensiveness. We let the silence do the heavy lifting, we listen for what is being spoken and what is unspoken and we listen to understand.
- We bring resolution. We ask what they have learned and what we

have, and we agree to check back in with each other at a set date.

This model has been my go to structure for a number of years now. It helps clarify what you want to say and is much clearer for the person who is hearing it. It ends well, with understanding, resolution and next steps clearly stated.

2) How to delegate

Delegation is also a challenge. There is such a temptation to do everything ourselves and yet we know that great leaders help others to be great leaders. The challenge isn't the desire to delegate but HOW we do that. How can we make it clear what we want to know and what we don't, what we need to have some control over and how much autonomy people have? We need to be clear about what we want but also clear about the boundaries that other people have. There is an excellent model for this by Tim Brighouse who talked about the 9 Levels of Delegation. It is a helpful shorthand for our teams. You can explain to them why in some areas they can operate at a 9 and in others, you would like them at a 1. It structures the conversation, makes it professional and personal and creates a common language.

9 Levels of Delegation

1. Look into this problem. Give me all the facts. I will decide what to do.
2. Let me know the options available, with the pros and cons of each. I will decide what to select.
3. Let me know the criteria for your recommendation, which alternatives you have identified and which one appears best to you, with any risk identified. I will make the decision.
4. Recommend a course of action for my approval.
5. Let me know what you intend to do. Delay action until I approve.

6. Let me know what you intend to do. Do it unless I say not to.
7. Take action. Let me know what you did. Let me know how it turns out.
8. Take action. Communicate with me only if action is unsuccessful.
9. Take action. No further communication with me is necessary.

3) How to live in the heart of the paradox

In leadership, we can often be on the lookout for the right answer or the right position. For example, we know we have to be responsible but sometimes we also have to be daring and how do we know how to be both? What does that even look like for us? In my own leadership journey as a Head of Department, Senior Leader in schools and now as the CEO of a large educational organisation, I have had to work out what the sweet spot is for me between seemingly opposite ideas. I have learned the power of both/and instead of either/or. These are some of the sweet spots that I try to live in in my leadership. It is a good exercise to do yourself in your own leadership.

- Trust people AND verify what we are being told is the truth.
- Give people autonomy AND be clear about the boundaries that exist.
- Give everyone a voice AND make it clear not everyone gets a vote.
- Be responsible so that we are not reckless AND be daring enough that we don't play it too safe.
- Know what we are doing is right AND be prepared to be wrong.
- Say 'I am doing everything I can think of' AND accept that we won't have thought of everything.
- Be humble enough to know we need others AND have enough belief that we can pull things off.

As we choose to be leaders, grow as leaders and develop others to

step up into leadership we need to know what we stand for and what we stand against. We need to be very comfortable with what is important and how we want to lead. Then, when we know that, we will find it significantly easier to have those crucial conversations, delegate without fear and to communicate our own position in the paradoxes. These lessons are important at every level of leadership whether you are there now or hope to be in the future. When we can do these things, we are equipped to lead and to thrive.

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- Rachel's new book, *Time To Think 2, The Things That Stop Our Teams and What To Do About Them*, is out in June and published by John Catt (Hodder).

What's the Big Fuss Over Drama?



Rebecca Wine, School Pupil Coach Lead and Teacher of Drama, St Helen's Girls School, London. Former Master of Theatre Studies, Eton College.

I have always been an avid performing artist. Initially, my parents were forced to endure my creative journey, until I convinced them in later years of the importance of my academic, technical commitment and investment in the subject. I never meant to be an educational practitioner, but over the course of a vast, eclectic, and colourful career of 16 years on, I have observed and supported a plethora of pupils past and present flourish, in a range of settings. I've had the privilege of working with disadvantaged pupils in inner-city London, as well as those from highly competitive grammar and selective schools.

What began as an active, academic, and practical relationship with the Drama Department, grew to encompass the responsibility of being Master of Theatre Studies from all demographics at Eton College, and finally the whole-school responsibilities I now carry out at St Helen's Day School for girls.

What's Drama's Role in Prep Education?

Exploring and studying Drama and Theatre hosts and offers the opportunity for instant Cultural Awareness, Appreciation and reflection. It exposes young minds to the rich and diverse cultures of the continent, fostering an understanding of their histories, values, and artistic expressions. It promotes cultural sensitivity and understanding, which are essential qualities in today's globalised world. We all seek the best for our young learners;

regardless of whether they embark on educational pathways towards local, selected, full or day boarding schools, our children deserve a deep and neutral understanding of others to succeed in their social groups and in the communities beyond them. Their openness at such absorbable and curious life-stages ensures they can go on confidently, purposefully, and effectively with wider and fuller prospects in the horizon.

Do Imagination and Creativity Prep our Prep pupils?

Engaging with and enjoying Theatre can be something quite ordinary amongst Prep families. It becomes a talking point that; spark both light-hearted and deeper conversations, it engages family and friends, and it provides a place to share your instinctive ideas – in the form of personal anecdotes and comparable lived-in experiences. Whether you're in Year 6 Prep or six years into your new job, you have something to say, or at least feel. It provokes thought, empathy, and inspiration. It can feel like real-life. The renowned 20th century, Russian Theatre practitioner *Stanislavski* made a career by perfecting his methodology of

Naturalism – you speak highly or lowly about what's been on stage or screen. What worked? What didn't? You debate, exercise perspective and judgement, and express your individual right to form opinion. This is where creativity and imagination are stimulated. Pupils' access to Drama in their young school lives is essential for the vibrant stories, characters, performance styles and practitioner works, unique to continental, and artistic influences. The global nature of Drama - From traditional Persian and Babylonian epic myths to Greek comedies, folk tales, Shakespearean tragedies, contemporary plays addressing social and political issues, and the original roots that stem from African theatre all those millennia ago – provides a wealth of material for young children to draw inspiration from. This never ends and can never be limited; it is expansive and unending and so the exploration at Prep becomes an essential foundation prior to Secondary school.

How are Critical, Broader Thinking and Analysis skills gained?

Analysing and interpreting theatrical texts and performances of social-injustice classics such as *Les Misérables* or Malorie Blackman's (OBE) *Noughts and Crosses*, promotes critical thinking skills, as pupils examine themes, symbols, and historical and cultural contexts. This cultivates a deeper understanding of complex issues such as personal navigation, identity, power dynamics, and social states, empowering pupils with limitless knowledge, engaging and teaching them how to consider, success, change and impact from all layers of our social hierarchy.

How are Empathy and Perspective achieved?

Theatre has a unique and forceful power to foster empathy and perspective, which are crucial in the early stages of education. Pupils are

faced with inhabiting the lives and experiences of characters from diverse, significant, and blended backgrounds. By exploring world narratives and viewpoints, pupils develop empathy for others and gain a wider understanding of the human condition. It unapologetically equips our young pupil body to manage and cope within real life. The entertaining value of design and artistic choices about costumes and sets encourages audience appreciation and communicates a whole new meaning to the storyline. They add to the ignition of dramatization, but they don't, however, take away from the importance, artistry, precision, representation, concepts, and context or overall meaning being communicated – they only enhance the themes we're invited to experience collectively.

What is the Artform of Confident Communication?

Participating in theatre naturally builds confidence and communication skills as we all agree, I'm sure! As pupils learn to express themselves creatively and collaboratively, they are provided with the opportunity to present their original and/or adapted ideas with clarity and conviction. They pitch their overall intention and solve problems to project their meaning and overarching message. These skills are invaluable and ongoing for social, academic, and professional settings, preparing pupils for future learning, personal development, and purpose. The LAMDA registrations, lessons, rehearsals and examinations here at St Helen's school is a sought-after route for our Prep pupils. Parents want their children to arrive ready for Secondary education with an already existing, positive relationship with Drama. This has been a noticeably growing trend in the Independent sector and it is promising that it is beginning to roll out far more widespread, slowly, but surely, and hopefully. The ability to compose, critique, refine and deliver a public speech, is something some of us might take for granted. The

deconstruction of Verse and Prose and the exposure to professional acting techniques sets our Prep pupils up for stretch, challenge, and FUN! With structured speech and Drama, and facts and knowledge, these transferrable skills are nurtured and embedded as a well-rehearsed performance. The world of Theatre is and has always been a privilege, not for the price of the ticket, but for what it offers you and how it instantly transforms and boosts your awareness.

Is Drama Like any Other Subject?

It is at Prep, where pupils are encouraged to play, discover, and navigate Drama. Whether they are rehearsing for a school musical or reviewing a recent school play, it is at Prep where the process can be mostly enjoyed as Drama for the sake of Drama. This is exciting and should be relished! From the Greek chorus' insightful commentary and dramatic action, encouraging us to use our voices, to Shakespeare's revolutionised Theatre of Drama and his poetry that teaches us to reflect and use our metacognitive abilities (still forming a significant proportion of our National curriculum and the study at English Literature GCSE) to the modern, inclusive-contemporary era, creating fusions between Ancient global philosophies – *Akala's* Hip Hop Shakespeare company and multimedia platform installations, we are still growing and adapting to changing times, and incorporating new forms, styles, and technologies. The evolution is boundless, just as our Prep pupils are and will be – with a little help from more Drama!

‘Resilience’



Natasha Devon MBE is a writer, presenter & activist.

‘It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society’.

I think of this quote, by philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti, every time someone asks me how we can make young people more ‘resilient’.

The word ‘resilience’ has always given me the ick. I think that’s probably because it was used ad nauseum when I was attempting to work with the government as their first ever Mental Health Champion for Schools, back in 2015.

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services had been cut to the bone via austerity measures, as had educational psychology and other vital forms of support which help children blossom. Class sizes were spiralling and teachers were struggling to give young people the individual attention they needed. Subjects with proven therapeutic value – like music, art, drama and sports – had been radically reduced in state schools under Michael Gove’s sweeping education reforms. Coursework was pretty-much scrapped and children as young as ten were having to sit exams containing questions even their teachers struggled to fathom. Many communities had lost their sports centres and libraries. Parents were having to work longer hours to

make ends meet, leaving them unable to spend as much quality time with their children. The Brexit referendum campaign was well underway, encouraging us all to hate each other and legitimising the bullying of any young person who might plausibly be a bit ‘foreign’.

...‘But why are young people struggling so much with their mental health?’ ministers were asking, whilst scratching their beards. ‘Probably something to do with phones. We need to make them more resilient’.

It’s worth noting, here, that the psychological definition of resilience is ‘the number of meaningful connections a person has’. It’s about being well supported, rather than a description of a character trait a person can turn on or off at will.

It’s also a good moment to reiterate that Baby Boomers, famed for their ‘stiff upper lip’ and ability to ‘soldier on’ in the face of challenges, are much more likely than other generations to be alcoholics and have a measurable point of vulnerability for suicide around retirement age. That’s the kind of ‘resilience’ the hyper-capitalist structure we all exist in would love young people to develop – self-medicate their way through their career/baby-making-and-rearing years and then have a crisis when they’ve outlived their usefulness. Its not,

however, what anyone who genuinely cares about them would want.

Furthermore, the gaining of resilience almost always involves the loss of something else – usually compassion, empathy or joy. For that reason, I treasure the fact that I still retain the capacity to be shocked and upset by the abusive social media and email correspondence my job as a high-profile woman with opinions attracts. If I develop a rhino hyde, I won’t be able to connect with vulnerable young people in the same way. I’ll never rise right to the top in a society that rewards a bordering-on-sociopathic disregard for the humanity of others (and indeed of ourselves), but I also wouldn’t want to.

Working as I do with teens and tweens, I believe supporting them involves holding them as you would a bar of soap. Squeeze too hard and the impact is the same as if you dropped them entirely. They need room to make mistakes, discover who they are, but with the solid boundaries and network of care that reassures them they are safe. At the moment, it feels as though many of them are simultaneously overprotected from the sorts of failures they’re meant to be experiencing and under-protected from serious psychological and emotional harm arising from a culture so at odds with the way human beings are supposed to live.

I hope the above has made you think about the approach we’re taking, but my intention is not to make anyone feel guilty. The situation we find ourselves in is not the fault of schools or parents specifically – After all, there’s nothing inherently wrong with wanting young people to thrive, even in harsh conditions.

Yet, I’d invite you to consider something I was told when starting out as an activist: Society is like a patchwork quilt. We can all make small changes in our own patch which, when sewn together, could produce something much more all-encompassing. Over the next few issues of Prep Magazine, I’ll be outlining some ways in which teachers, parents, carers and communities can hold young people like that metaphorical bar of soap. How we can all make changes in our patch.

Ultimately, I’d love to inhabit a society where when someone says ‘I’m in distress’, the response is ‘okay what is going on in this person’s environment and how can we make adjustments?’ rather than ‘what is wrong with this person and how can we change them?’. Or, as a meme I recently saw on Instagram put it ‘we need to stop glorifying resilience without addressing the systems that create resilient people’.



Community Project that is a Joy for All



Antonia Lee, Head of Winchester House Prep School

As a Prep School located in the Manor House and estate in the heart of Brackley, a small town in Northamptonshire with the motto Non Nobis Solum (Not for Ourselves Alone) and a strong sense of purposeful fun at the heart of all we do, we wanted to grow a community project that truly welcomed Brackley into our community.

Two years ago, we tentatively started our Dementia Friendly Choir. This started as an hour on a Thursday morning, spanning across our morning break for Housians (pupils at Winchester House). We invited the local care homes and put a small ad out for anyone with dementia and their carers to join our small choir. From these tiny beginnings we now have a group of over 40 Brackley residents

who join us every Thursday and many other times as well, that is an integral and joyous part of both Winchester House and Brackley.

The members of the Dementia Choir have truly become part of our school and join us for things like performance dress rehearsals, our Remembrance Day celebrations and national days such as the Queen's Jubilee and the King's Coronation. They are on site every Thursday morning often for a couple of hours and may be in our Forum (Recital Hall) for choir but may also be taking part in 'seated ballet' led by a Housian Alumnae who is a dance graduate or in Early Years for colouring, craft and chat.

At all these events Housians join them, often choosing to spend their breaktime with the Dementia Choir members they now know well catching up on gossip, leading the singing or joining in the craft activity.

The relationships that have blossomed between the youngest and oldest members of our Winchester House family demonstrates the undoubted

connection and natural communication that there is between these two extremes of the generations. Those of us in the middle are largely superfluous and it brings joy to us all. It is also clear that our pupils have developed skills of empathy, patience, communication and inter-generational understanding in a natural and impressive way. I truly believe it gives the children something that could not be provided in any other way. This group and relationships contribute to us living out part of our vision to 'grow potential. And change the world one pupil at a time'.

I am delighted that the group is so appreciated by members and their carers – we simply grow and grow by word of mouth and this same word of mouth has led to a local supermarket often sending flowers via one of our Teaching Assistants to distribute to the Dementia Choir group. We continue to evolve and go from strength to strength and I feel passionately that this initiative lives out our motto, strengthens our school and local community, benefits our pupils and is a great deal of fun for all involved.



Storytelling is a Core Part of Education



Rev. Anthony Buckley; “Chaplain to the Chaplains”, Tisca.

Solving a maths equation is telling a story; watching a chemistry experiment is watching a story unfold; a German translation is a story of conversion, word for word, phrase for phrase. English and History of course are full of stories, but so are Art, Music and Design & Technology – how is this object, this symphony, to be created, what is the story in it and behind it? Religious Education is about the overarching story of humanity’s interaction with God and God’s interaction with humanity, and all faiths use story a great deal as a means of teaching. Jesus told a lot of stories.

Pastoral care is storytelling or perhaps storylistening: What is my story? How does it fit into the stories of those around me? How do I tell my story well?

Leaving aside the excellent stories to be told elsewhere, in this brief article I will focus on story in literature, and how faith-related themes may be found, and may prove to be helpful as we encourage pupils to think about spirituality. Because of space, we will focus chiefly on one author.

If choosing one, it perhaps makes sense to consider the best-selling novelist of all time, Agatha Christie. If a writer is this popular, then she is likely to be writing about things that resonate across cultures and backgrounds. What is the attraction? What are people looking for that they then must feel they find in her books? Perhaps we learn about people, their hopes and fears, by noting what they like to read.

It would seem that people like **justice**.

Unsurprisingly in detective novels (And Christie was there near the beginning and shaped the genre) justice is a central theme, and, for Christie, as was foreshadowed in Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, this can happen both in earthly terms and in something stronger and larger than human justice.

Miss Marple: *You say crime goes unpunished; But does it? Unpunished by the law perhaps; But cause and effect works outside the law. To say that every crime brings its own punishment is by way of being a platitude, and yet in my opinion nothing can be truer.*

Poirot: *Evil never goes unpunished. But the punishment is sometimes secret.*

Included in a desire for justice is a desire for **truth**:

Poirot: *I mean to arrive at the truth. The truth, however ugly in itself, is always curious and beautiful to the seeker after it.*

Poirot: *I do not take sides. I am on the side only of the truth.*



Picture provided by Emmanuel Christian School, Oxford

And **morality**, for people to behave well:

Poirot: *He was not nice, no. But he was alive and now he is dead, and as I told him once, I have a bourgeois attitude to murder, I do not approve of it.*

It seems we also like a sense of **completeness**, of things being resolved.

Poirot: *I reserve the explanations for the last chapter.*

Faith is treated positively, and with good humour.

Miss Marple: *When I am in really bad trouble I always say a little prayer to myself – anywhere, when I’m walking along the street, or at a bazaar. And I always get an answer.*

Poirot: *Life is like a train, mademoiselle. It goes on. And it is a good thing that it is so. Because the train gets to its journey’s end at last... Trust the train, mademoiselle, for it is le Bon Dieu who drives it. And trust Hercule Poirot. He knows.*

Kindness is a repeatedly affirmed virtue:

Poirot: *You have the good heart to think of an old man. And the good heart, it is in the end worth all the little grey cells.*

And the characters are **ordinary**. No-one has super-human powers, we can all identify with the criminals and with the crime-solvers. Even Poirot is a very human character, with his fussy ways.

Justice, truth, morality, completeness, faith, kindness, ordinariness. These seem to have landed rather well with readers, so perhaps they are themes that as teachers we do well to affirm. In good schools, good lessons, these are honoured. Whatever role we play, we may wish to consider how we express these seven qualities. We hope they may be found in our conversations and judgements, our teaching and planning, our meetings and decisions.

Agatha Christie was a contemporary of C S Lewis and J R R Tolkien. One can trace these same themes through Narnia and Middle Earth, and of course in many other writers that have stood the test of time. Usually the themes are handled obliquely. They quietly help the narrative but they do not over-intrude. Readers might be familiar with the quotation, sometimes attributed to Maya Angelou that “They will forget what you say, they will forget what you do, but they will remember how you made them feel.” There is a ‘feel’ in the great storytellers that draws in the desire of the reader.

Each of our lessons is a story: How we greet the pupils, the kindness and the justice, the encouraging of the ordinary, the values we display, including honesty, the bringing things to order by the final bell, the affirming, if needed, that we are more than a mix of atoms and chemicals, that something bigger is happening.

Thus perhaps Elrond’s words in the Lord of the Rings, as he draws together the fellowship to undertake the task set before them, might be on our minds as the pupils take their places: *“That is the purpose for which you are called hither. Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. You have come and are here met, in this very nick of time, by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered that we, who sit here, and none others, must now find counsel for the peril for the world.”*

It may sound rather over the top for a Year 9 RE lesson on a Friday afternoon, rather different from our opening words, but at its heart we might yet be saying the same thing.

Kaira Konko Lodge and Scout Centre



Marion Christmas MBE JP, Founder of Kaira Konko Lodge and Scout Centre, The Gambia.

I have been involved in Scouting since the day I took my son Paul to join Cubs with the 2nd Bentley Scout Group. I had no intention of joining myself but a few years later there I was as Akela. With two sons involved and my husband Michael as treasurer I can say we are a true Scouting family.

Hampshire is a great county to be involved in Scouting, for young and old alike. Over Christmas and New Year 1989/90 Hampshire Scout Expeditions ran an expedition to The Gambia, West Africa. My eldest son Paul was one of thirty Venture Scouts aged from sixteen to twenty, plus leaders, who would spend six weeks camping up country in a small mud hut village called Jiroff. Their task was to build two classroom blocks in conjunction with Action Aid, one at Jiroff and the other at a

larger village called Soma, some 15km away. Bearing in mind there was no electricity or running water only well water, no supermarket, no B&Q and no communication it was quite a task. Each team of Venture Scouts were allocated a Gambian Venture Scout to be their local guide and translator. So for six weeks they worked and lived together and great friendships were formed. It was a very emotional time when they had to leave. Our Ventures decided there and then that they would raise funds to bring the four Gambians over to the UK to an International Camp, Hampshire Venture 1, to be held at Rushmoor Arena in 1992.

The young Gambians duly arrived at Gatwick, literally in the clothes they stood up in. They came from very poor families and would not have travelled far from their village before embarking on their trip to the UK. They were to be in the UK for four weeks and an exciting, challenging, programme had been arranged for them. I was asked if I would give them 'home hospitality' for two nights prior to them returning home I said yes, and the moment they

walked through the front door they stole my heart and changed my life.

These were young men who stared poverty and hardship in the face every day. They were very thin. They did not have jobs as there weren't any. Three of them were the first born in their families, traditionally named Lamin, and they told of the responsibilities that fell on their shoulders to provide for their families. They spoke excellent English and were politically aware of what was going on in the world. At home, on a shared radio, they would listen to BBC World Service, Focus on Africa, daily. They had all been to school but only when their parents had enough money to pay the fees. We had a lot of fun in those two days and I asked them what they would like to take back with them. I thought they might choose a small radio or a pair of trainers but they said "A Scout Centre, like Ferney Croft in the New Forest" and then the words slipped of my tongue, "I'll build you one". Their faces were a picture but nothing compared to my husband's! They flew home the next day. Why did I say "I'll build you one?" I asked myself. It was such a stupid thing

to say. I had never built anything in my life and more to the point I had never been to Africa. Anyway not to worry, they have gone now and they will probably forget all about it.

Three months later the letter dropped on the doormat. "Dear Mom,and we have told the District Chief and the Village Chief and everyone in Soma is praying for you and waiting for you to come to build the Scout Centre" From your sons, Lamin Jarjue, Lamin Manjang and Lamin Kinteh. There was no going back. A promise is a promise.

The Gambia remains one of the poorest countries in Africa. Mortality rates for pregnant women and infants are not good to say the least. Malaria is the biggest killer. Yet despite the hardships the Gambian people are stoic. They are welcoming, friendly, fun and amaze me how they cope with what life, unjustly, throws at them.

They live in poverty only six hours flying time away from my comfortable life.

Fundraising for the project was not easy and I'm not surprised. Why would people want to trust me and my 'Lamins' when we were so inexperienced. So for many years I was on my own begging, borrowing and, not quite stealing, to get the project off the ground. Communication was difficult and sending money safely was expensive and slow. My youngest son

Mark came with me on my first visit in 1995 to buy the land. The heat and the wonderful aroma that is Africa hit us as the door of the plane opened. The airport in those days was a series of old huts and we had to carry our luggage from the plane. The 'Lamins' were there to meet us and we hired a cab to take us to our hotel for the night before travelling the 120km up country to Soma by bus the following day. The taxi broke down 40 metres from the airport and that really was a taste of things to come.

So followed years of fund raising and it was the patience and trust of the 'Lamins' that kept me going. Finally a very basic Kaira Konko Lodge was opened by the British High Commissioner in 1998.

Nearly 30 years on Kaira Konko Lodge and Scout Centre now comprises of a large air conditioned hall, eight double/twin en-suite bedrooms and a further six en-suite bedrooms available on our adjacent complex. All rooms have air conditioning and Wi-Fi. We have a large Bantanba, a covered meeting and eating area, alongside a well equipped traditional kitchen where our Gambian ladies prepare excellent, tasty food. So the lodge is great for large groups as the hall doubles up as dormitory accommodation. We have our regular Gambians visitors, including

Government Officials and NGO's. The hall is used on a regular basis for educational and health workshops. We also have international visitors and groups staying at KK. Many of our overseas visitors come to participate in community work. As a result Kaira Konko Lodge is now self supporting on a daily basis and able to contribute to community projects. We always have rice available for the most needy.

Education is paramount.

We have and do sponsor many children through school both boys and girls. Primary education is free but a child has to have flip flops or trainers, school uniform and pencils before being allowed into school. At middle and high school there are fees and books on top.

In 1999 the Soma School Millennium Appeal was launched. 1000 primary children in two shifts, one cold water tap with classrooms crumbling around them. Lady Mary Fagan, the then Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, became our Patron and launched the appeal to Hampshire Schools. We built 18 classrooms in all.

Teachers from Hampshire Schools, Hampshire Fire and Rescue, Staff from Treloar College, Groups of Explorer Scouts, Winchester University, the British Army and others from Hampshire have visited and taken part in, and funded local projects. Wells





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have been repaired, bore holes drilled, houses rebuilt following the rains, a fire station supplied with a fire engine, land rover, uniforms and training, school libraries provided, classrooms built, new desks and chairs, a legal library for the Supreme Court, boardwalks for safe access to the rice fields, the list is endless. During covid the Gambian Government completely shut the country down and people were fined heavily if they left their compound. Disastrous for people that live hand to mouth. We quickly launched an appeal here in the UK. Our sponsors and friends generosity raised £10,000 within days which enabled us to distribute rice where it was most needed in the rural villages.

Lamin Kinteh, one of the original Lamin's manages Kaira Konko and our community projects. He is well respected within Soma and beyond for his commitment to his community. He has been awarded an Honorary Commonwealth MBE for his work. I received an MBE too for services to the people of The Gambia. We were both extremely proud to accept the award on behalf of everyone who helped make the impossible happen.

My journey has been simply amazing. There have been tremendous highs and lows, so normal for Africa. I despaired in the early days of ever achieving the build of Kaira Konko but the patience and total understanding of the young Lamins helped me through. KK, as it is fondly known, is now self supporting but we rely heavily on fund raising and sponsorship to continue our work in the community. There is no middle man and our UK committee is made up of Scouting volunteers. Every penny we raise goes directly to our projects and we pride ourselves in spending donations wisely. Our next objective is to replace our aging vehicle which is crucial to our community work.

For more information or to donate please go to kairakonko.com You can find us on Facebook too.



Report from my last trip – February 2024

Friends and members of Kaira Konko Scout Active Support have enjoyed a wonderful week at Kaira Konko Lodge and Scout Centre. In every small community we have received a huge welcome. Traditional songs, accompanied by clapping, drumming and dancing have drawn everyone together. Over the week the team have supported the following projects.

- Kaiaf Health Centre – alongside the donation of vital equipment, we are funding a new shower and toilet on the maternity unit adjacent to the delivery room. A medical member of our team joined the health centre staff to visit rural villages to give babies vaccinations and health checks.
- Maternity care – supported by our Christmas fund raising appeal, maternity kits were assembled and distributed to expectant mothers. Baby clothes were also donated and received with great appreciation. A knitted baby hat can save a life.
- Soma School – over the week, and working in partnership with a local carpenter, approximately thirty desks have been repaired enabling children to learn at a safe and sturdy table. This has put two classrooms back in action. We will be fundraising to replace the solar panels of the two boreholes supplying water to the truly successful Women's Garden, run by the Mothers Club.
- Jenoi School library – in partnership with the school librarian, the team have created an engaging environment for reading and learning. This was alongside the donation of gardening equipment, classroom resources and school lunch supplies.
- Fon Koi Kunda School – food supplies were delivered alongside gardening equipment. We will

be fundraising to repair the solar water pump relied on for watering the school garden.

- Rice deliveries – supported by our Christmas fundraising appeal, six rural schools have been provided with school lunch supplies. Each school had been without food for several weeks affecting school attendance.
- Sira's House – Sira came to Kaira Konko Scout Centre during the Explorer Expedition in August 2023 desperate for rice for her children. The Explorers visited her compound. They immediately put out an appeal for a borehole for her village and a new house for Sira's family as her home was in a state of collapse. We visited her compound to oversee the completion of the new house and to see the transformation the Explorers appeal has made to her and the whole village. A tribute to the compassion of Stanley's Own, Magellan Explorer Unit.
- Kaira Konko Lodge and Scout Centre now has eight double/twin bedded rooms all with en suite and air conditioning. The main hall has been refurbished to a high standard with air conditioning and conference facilities. Education, health, youth training and other workshops are held on a regular basis for up to 70 people. This vital source of income means that Kaira Konko is self supporting with any surplus going into community projects.
- Kaira Konko Scout Active Support is active in fundraising for for Kaira Konko's community outreach work and facilitates the sharing of experience and skills.

If you would like to support us please go to kairakonko.com to donate.

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National Schools' Handwriting Competition 2024



The ever-popular SATIPS National Handwriting Competition is now underway and we look forward to receiving entries from all schools as well as SATIPS members.

The competition is open to all Prep, Junior and Primary Schools, with the winning school receiving the SATIPS shield. Individual winners and runners up also receive appropriate prizes and all entrants receive a certificate.

The report of the 2023 competition by our chief judge, Amanda McLeod, is published in the Autumn 2023 edition of Prep School Magazine, available online at <http://www.ntprinting.co.uk/prepschoolmagazine> and contains excellent advice for teachers.

We are very grateful to the 2023 winners, St Cedd's School, Chelmsford and to Caroline Picking, editor of the SATIPS English broadsheet, for providing this year's poems as per our tradition and can be viewed on the SATIPS Website www.satips.org

HOW TO ENTER:

To enter, pupils should copy out the poem for their relevant Group in their best and neatest handwriting on a piece of A4 paper. Lines, suitable for a candidate's size of writing, may be used (but not guide lines that indicate trunk, ascender or descender positions). Please do not use ordinary A4-lined paper.

All entries must be in pencil. This allows the judges to gauge pressure and provide a basis for objective judging.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. **It is very important** that the pupil's first and surname, age at the time of writing and school postcode are written on the **back** of each entry.
2. Please do not write any personal information on the front of the entry nor the school name anywhere to maintain the integrity of the judging process.
3. Please send a complete list of the names of all the pupils who have entered and their ages, and all staff entries (ages not necessary!) on headed school paper with confirmation of the organising teacher's name and either personal or school email.
4. Send all entries, lists, entry form and cheques made payable to SATIPS to:

Mrs. E A Jackson,
7 Lakeside,
Overstone Park,
Northants,
NN6 0QS

Please note that we cannot accept a cheque payment for less than £10. Cheques must be drawn on a school account and not a personal one.

Payments can also be made electronically to the account below. Please quote reference – "**Handwriting**"

Bank: CAF Bank Ltd
Account number: 00013271
Sort code: 40-52-40

5. For obvious reasons, entries cannot be returned. Photocopies are not accepted.
6. There is no limit to the number of entries from schools but only one entry per pupil is allowed. Please note, the overall winning school is not based on number of entries but top placements in the categories. This is to encourage schools to give as many children as possible a chance to enter and receive their certificate.
7. Only schools may enter the competition via a named teacher.

ENTRY FEES:

- a) 50p per pupil for SATIPS member schools
- b) £1 per pupil for non-member schools

There are five entry Groups

GROUP A (4, 5 & 6 year olds)

GROUP B (7 & 8 year olds)

GROUP C (9 & 10 year olds)

GROUP D (11, 12 & 13 year olds)

GROUP E (Staff Prize – open to all school staff)

Please visit www.satips.org for the Competition Entry Form, Poems and to view the full competition rules.

Entries close Friday, 7th June 2024

Successful schools will be notified at the beginning of the Autumn Term, 2024

We receive many entries each year and to help us sort them quickly, please ensure that you have included the relevant information with the entries from your school. Please make sure you have also read the full competition rules.

Good Luck! We look forward to receiving your entries.

Thank you.

P A Jackson
SATIPS Director of Education
education@satips.org



The aim of the competition is to encourage best handwriting in schools for all pupils. We want to encourage as many entries as possible and the overall winning school competition is not based on the overall quality of entries but the number of pupils in the top places for each age group. **Thus we want schools to enter a minimum of 20 entries.** There is absolutely NO maximum.

All pupils who enter the Handwriting competition receive a certificate.

The photograph shows the 2023 winners, St Cedd's School, Chelmsford.

National Schools' Handwriting Competition 2024

GROUP A POEM (4, 5 and 6 years of age)

Plastic Bag

by Karmelo C. Iribarren

Look at it
there
in the middle of the street,
alone,
motionless,
afraid
that a street sweeper might appear,
dreaming
of a bit of wind
to make it feel
like a cloud.

GROUP B POEM (7 and 8 years of age)

When Your Letters Came

by Joseph Coelho

When your letters came...
I stuck the stamps in my scrapbook,
sent my dreams to a secret shore.

A place imagined from each tiny image:
peeled palm trees,
grand ships and heroes,
a magical land

where you sat under a sticky sky,
writing promises
in sun-faded ink.

GROUP C POEM (9 and 10 years of age)

Wish

by Brian Moses

Clasp in your hand
the single black feather

left in your garden
as a gift from a crow.

Whisper the words
that you learned from the wind.

Find dragonfly spit
and a snake's shed skin.

Find a flower's heartbeat
And the moon's lost silver.

Now gather them together
with the crow's black feather ...
and wish ...

GROUP D POEM (11, 12 and 13 years of age)

Bluebottle by Judith Nicholls

Who dips, dives
swoops out of space,
a buzz in his wings
and sky on his face;
now caught in the light,
now gone without trace,
a sliver of glass,
never still in one place?

Who's elusive as a pickpocket,
lord of the flies;
who moves like a rocket,
bound for the skies?
Who's catapult, aeroplane,
always full throttle?
Sky diver, Jumping Jack,
comet, bluebottle!

GROUP E POEM (Staff)

New Season

by Wendy Cope

No coats today. Buds bulge on chestnut trees,
and on the doorstep of a big, old house
a young man stands and plays his flute.

I watch the silver notes fly up
and circle in blue sky above the traffic,
travelling where they will.

And suddenly this paving stone
midway between my front door and the bus stop
is a starting point.

From here I can go anywhere I choose.

The Importance of Linking Science to Other Areas of Learning



Alex Farrer is Head of Junior Science at Wimbledon High School and the Primary Science Quality Mark Regional Lead for the East Midlands.



A simple request from our Head of Art, Isabelle Dubois, instigated a cross-curricular project that involved art and science teachers from 18 schools, leading to the publication of the teacher resource "Sketchbook Science". Isabelle's request was to borrow the science lab for a lesson, as she wanted to use the blackout blinds to create the correct light conditions to allow pupils to explore how the size and shape of shadows could be altered. This exploration would then

support pupils to draw self-portrait silhouettes using pencil and fine liners with a focus on making adaptations and refinements in response to peer feedback. Teachers discussing how science and art learning could be combined in this activity, led to us exploring other ways we could connect art and science to enhance pupils' conceptual understanding and skills in both subjects.

As a fellow of the Primary Science Teaching Trust, I was able to apply for funding to develop a series of activities to link science and art learning. As my

school was completing our Primary Science Quality Mark re-accreditation at Outreach level, this project fitted in well with a whole school priority of making a positive impact on the science teaching and learning in our partner schools. We worked with the science and art leads at 17 other schools to explore ideas together, test lessons out with our classes, gather feedback and then produce a teacher resource. Each of the eight projects are inspired by the work of great artists and introduce pupils to a new skill and technique in art, as well as including science investigative questions covering the different enquiry types and scientific enquiry skills. It was very important that the academic rigour of both science and art was maintained so that meaningful learning and skill and knowledge development could take place in both subjects. It was also important that teachers could use the projects whatever their level of science and art knowledge, so step by step instructions, background information and supporting links were included in the publication.

Artists and scientists have so much in common. It would be difficult to say whether Maria Sibylla Merian was a scientist or an artist. She demonstrated great curiosity in both science and art and made a significant contribution to society by using her scientific and artistic knowledge and skills to create her detailed drawings. One of the aims of the Sketchbook Science resource is to make the connections between art and science explicit as well as also suggesting innovative activities to develop pupils' skills in both areas. The Sketchbook Science projects enable pupils to have the time to delve deeper into science and art, to describe the world around them using their creativity and imaginations, to take risks and learn from mistakes, and to reflect on how to improve their work, just as artists and scientists do.

Sketchbook science projects also give opportunity for pupils to use and practise key vocabulary, for

them to collaborate with each other and showcase their work at family events such as exhibitions. There is also opportunity for greater pupil engagement, especially for those pupils who perhaps don't ordinarily see themselves as the "sciencey" ones in the classroom. These pupils may think that science might not be for them, but they might be interested in art, so by connecting the learning in both subjects the aim is to inspire pupils and develop their science identity. Pupils in the project schools didn't realise that artists and scientists have so much in common and that improving skills in one subject could benefit the other, so this was a key piece of learning for them. Teachers having the opportunity to work alongside each other on lesson planning was also a fabulous opportunity, with art and science leads from different schools sharing ideas and challenging each other whilst exploring together the connections between the subjects and the skill cross-over that existed. This is demonstrated by a quote from one of the project teachers, "Combining art and science has allowed us to really expand both our horizons and we have gained so much inspiration, and so many new skills and ideas from each other".

When planning lessons in isolation, it is easy to get carried away with ideas that we think will interest pupils and ensure that they make progress. Collecting teacher and pupil voice from so many different schools ensured that refinements could be made, and projects could be chosen that we knew from feedback would engage, inspire and challenge all pupils, as well as achieving both art and science teaching objectives.

In the "Pollination in a Vase" activity, pupils are encouraged to look closely at flowers, identifying different parts and drawing diagrams to explain what happens when the flower is pollinated by an insect. Pupils also carry out a pattern-seeking investigation in the school grounds, gathering data to answer their questions, and choosing their own way to record their results.



MARIA SYBILLA MERIAN (1647-1717)
 Maria Sibylla Merian was from Frankfurt in Germany. She was a naturalist as well as an artist, with a particular interest in insects. She illustrated a wide range of insect species, capturing stages of their life cycles, including the metamorphosis of the silkworm.



"Flowers in a Chinese Vase" (c.1670-1680) by Maria Sibylla Merian.



Some of the project schools used the Sketchbook Science activities for wider school initiatives such as collapsed timetable days, after school clubs or during Science Week. One school launched the “Shadows and Silhouettes” activity at a staff meeting, giving teachers time to explore the ideas together and challenging them to develop a lesson appropriate for each year group. Examples of pupil work were then brought along to a subsequent staff meeting so that teachers could look at the progression in both art and science knowledge and skills from Reception to year 6, gaining ideas from each other and identifying areas that might need targeting in the future. Another school spent two weeks focussing on science, art and writing, asking each year group to choose one Sketchbook Science activity (or their own lesson activity inspired by Sketchbook Science) and allowing the pupils to be fully immersed in combining their art and science learning. At the end of the fortnight their work was put on display in every area of the school, and parents were invited to tour their “Art of Science” exhibition. The artwork was put on sale as a valuable fundraiser for the school as an added bonus. The inspirational video of Stanley Primary School carrying out this immersive fortnight can be seen via this link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4BEIB3sAQY>

“Time” was the theme for British Science Week 2024, and the time it takes for plastic pollution to biodegrade was the focus for another of the project schools during their own science week. The week coincided with the Big Plastic Count, so they were able to carry out Sketchbook Science activities from “Not Junk but Art” including how to make branching keys to classify different types of plastic and testing plastic samples to explore their properties. Plastic recycling was collected and counted by pupils at school and at

home, and they then used the recycling they had collected to create collages and sculptures for a whole school exhibition taking inspiration from artists such as Bordalo II.

This sculpture of an Iberian Lynx was made from plastic waste by street artist Bordalo II and put on display in Lisbon to raise awareness of the problems of plastic pollution in 2019.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/20792787@N00/48292298477>

Scientists and artists try to understand and describe the world around us, using their imagination and creative skills to solve problems. Whole school planning across different curriculum disciplines such

as art and science will help to inspire pupils to do the same, enriching their experiences, and encouraging them to keep exploring and asking questions far beyond the science lab. If you are interested in finding out more about the eight Sketchbook Science projects, they are available as a free digital download on the PSTT website:

<https://pstt.org.uk/resources/sketchbook-science/>

Alex is always happy to share her expertise and ideas for enhancing science learning experiences, whether through projects such as this, or by involvement in the year-long Primary Science Quality Mark professional development programme. Please do contact her via Linked In if you would like to know more.



Stillness in the Storm



Ian Morris, Chaplain
at Bishop Stortford College.

You might have had the fun of carrying out a Jar Soil Test. Into a glass jar, soil and water are added, shaken (not stirred!) then left to settle. In the stillness the muddied maelstrom wanes and given enough time, the water clears as the components of the soil rise or fall according to their densities.

Each of us is like one of those jars. Mainly made up of water we live a life that is full of this that and the other. And because we are always on the go, we lose sight of not only what is what but more importantly, what really matters. Life is to be lived – but to live it well we all need times to stop and be still. We need time to let the debris settle and the waters to clear so that we can work out what’s what.

Sadly, technology has conspired against us in this regard. Even though technology is utterly awesome and does incredible things, the everyday technology on which we have come to rely has been designed to keep us distracted and keep us on the go for

that is how the technology firms make their fortunes. Even those apps and games that are financially free and don’t cost us a penny, end up costing us so much more as our brains become reliant on what is offered. It’s not just the digitally native generation that is affected, even the baby boomers amongst us are hooked and find it hard to switch off – both mentally as well as the technology.

Like many others, I confess to largely keeping my devices on standby rather than switching them off because switching the machine off just seems way too drastic. I want it to be up and running at a moment’s notice even though I know that there will come a point when the system becomes so overloaded it needs rebooting – usually at the most inopportune time! If only I had switched it off, allowed it to settle down and sort itself out, then it wouldn’t play up five minutes before I need it for the presentation I am about to make. These are the moments that shake the jar, muddy the waters and can leave us floundering.

Psalm 46:10 was written some 3000 years ago, way before today’s technology and super busy, fast paced modern lives and yet its simple instruction resonates as much today

as way back when; “Be still and know that I am God”. In a world of so much noise and distraction, the Almighty chooses stillness and silence to reveal Himself. It was not only the psalmist who discovered this, but Elijah also when running for his found God in the quiet whisper and not the fire and earthquake, Samuel found Him in the stillness of the night and Jesus would often go out alone before sunrise to hear and see more clearly before getting on with doing what needed to be done.

Moreover, these findings of religious characters are not just some fairy story. Scientific studies show that stopping and being still allows our brain to reboot, sort out our priorities and get a clearer sense of who we are and where we are heading. Researchers tell us that we would all benefit from allowing ourselves to become “profoundly bored” for it is through that uncomfortable state we begin to see more clearly and think more creatively.

Stressed?

Stop.

Be Still...

Ian

Professional Diplomas for Pupils Aged 11-13?



Ben Evans, Headmaster at Windlesham House Prep School explains more about the schools' ground-breaking diploma, which will have formal exams and coursework...

Could Professional Diplomas for pupils aged 11-13 better equip them for the real world?



With the new academic year in full swing, it has been exciting to launch our professional two-year diploma course that will see our Year 7 and Year 8 pupils complete a comprehensive 'learning for life' programme in addition to the core curriculum subjects. The Windlesham House Diploma and Futures Programme is designed to equip children aged between 11 and 13 years, with the foundation skills and attributes required to flourish at senior school as well as in their future lives.

The course itself is unique to the school and will allow our children to develop the qualities and skills that extend beyond traditional academic subjects. Throughout the two-year diploma, our pupils will formally study areas that will help to prepare them for the next stage of their education and their life beyond. Even though we are a school steeped in tradition, we are committed to ensuring our teaching and learning is innovative, exciting and academically rigorous. Whilst there are a number of alternatives to common entrance (CE)

readily available to adopt, we were keen to develop our own unique and bespoke programme of study which links closely to our ACE Learning habits (Active learner, Critical thinker and Explorer) and was also aligned to our ethos of creativity, curiosity and critical thinking.

We were keen to cover aspects such as effective communication, working as a team and dealing with conflict resolution, and as well leadership sessions looking at the value and attitudes of caring and inspirational leaders. It is also important that our pupils learn about self-reflection, how to think critically, become positive thinkers and manage things like stress management, time management and exam pressures.

Nurturing essential life skills
One of the most successful and enjoyable elements of the diploma course is the business enterprise scheme. This not only puts our pupil's leadership skills into practice, but it also teaches them invaluable financial literacy, marketing knowledge,

business acumen, and gives them an understanding of sustainability and charitable endeavours. Perhaps most importantly, it also gives them the ability to work as a team, to communicate effectively, develop empathy, nurturing a deeper appreciation for other people's opinions and recognising the need for compromise.

The two-year course has also allowed us to cover many other essential life skills through our 'Diploma Dialogues' – a wide ranging series of talks, presentations, question-time events and fireside chats delivered by an array of professionals, enthusiasts and experts in their subjects. To have the time and opportunity to listen, be inspired and to question and to debate, is transformational for pupils at a time when they are keen to learn and develop their understanding in all areas. Traditionally, these kinds of opportunities may have been more of an add-on or special event, but the diploma has ensured it is now fully embedded in everyday life.

Over the last few years, it has become evident that there are more forward thinking, alternative and exciting educational routes than the current common entrance syllabus and examinations that many children complete at the end of Year 8. Our new diploma replaces and enhances that route, with a rich, rigorous curriculum and the addition of essential social, leadership and team skills that will better equip our young people for the future.

Adequate preparation for life beyond school
Whilst CE has always been the traditional curriculum and assessment route for our senior pupils, it has become apparent over recent years that this knowledge-heavy and exam-based model was not necessarily preparing them adequately for senior school life and beyond. With so much emphasis on memorising



and regurgitating, we wanted to establish a more creative and engaging curriculum, one that allows children to explore and enjoy their learning through a rich and academically rigorous programme of study across all areas of the curriculum – whether that is music, computing, art and design, drama or PE.

Our new assessment process involves a balance of formal written examinations as well as extended projects, practical assessments, conferences, presentations and debates. Alongside knowledge acquisition, we are keen to use this process to assess pupils' deeper understanding, their communication and collaboration skills, their ability to think critically and to flounder intelligently.

Whilst each individual school should follow a curriculum and assessment model that is best suited to their setting, school aims and pupil body, I can highly recommend the freedom, flexibility and enjoyment that comes from having the courage to think differently. Most importantly, schools should ask themselves the question – are they purely preparing children with the skills to pass exams, or are they equipping them for successful and high achieving futures?

Beyond careers guidance

We have also been running a series of Learning for Life sessions that are taught weekly, and these involve lessons in areas such as public speaking, debating and money management. The diploma also includes further non-compulsory elements such as enrichment sessions delivered on a Saturday morning where pupils work on collaborative leadership and entrepreneurial projects as well as outdoor orienteering, local charitable endeavours and first aid training.

The Futures Programme element of our diploma also seeks to go beyond

simple careers guidance too, by examining future school choices, giving pupils advice on planning for GCSE options, scholarship support and even looking ahead to university entrance and courses. Pupils will have access to carefully planned sessions from senior school teachers to explore GCSE and A-Level option choices advising of the best routes for specific careers. Pupils will also explore the transition from prep to senior school and learn how best to navigate the challenges of starting at a new, bigger school as well as how to make the most of the innovative and exciting opportunities.

By launching this diploma course, we are essentially looking to widen our pupils' skill sets and give them more exposure to the real world. So, it's important that we focus on building their confidence, whether that's through developing public speaking skills or giving them regular opportunities to attend exhibitions and presentations, the more space they have to explore, innovate and take risks, the more resilient and self-reliant they will become.

Assessment and recognition

With formal examinations, coursework, presentations, reflective journals and practical assessments, pupil progress and achievement will be recognised through a system of continuous assessment. The inclusion of a research and presentation element is particularly exciting as it promotes independent thinking, inquiry and communication skills.

We have developed a bespoke criteria for assessment too, which is based on a 1 to 10 scale, marking the assessment areas and demonstrating a more nuanced evaluation of pupils' progress and attainment. With this broken down into emerging, evolving, expected, exceeding and exceptional bands, pupils and parents can clearly understand the levels reached and from where targets for enhanced progress can be set. At the end of

the two-year course, each pupil will be awarded the Windlesham House Diploma gaining either a pass, merit or distinction.

In summary, if your school is looking to move away from the confines of CE, my advice is not to rush into any decisions or jump on passing bandwagons. It is essential to examine all options very carefully, to take the time to consult with teaching staff and parents, and to carefully consider how children will be best prepared for the next stage of their education. Much courage and clarity of thought is needed, but from experience, the rewards can be immeasurable.

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Grange Primary School, Killeel

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What Schools Need to Know



Michael Ter-Berg, CEO of Thomson Screening, talks about children with unidentified vision or hearing impairments, and what schools need to know.

It is now thought that a large percentage of 'learning difficulties' could be due to hearing and/or vision impairments. According to the Cooper Institute, 60% of 'problem learners' may suffer from vision problems. Additionally, a number of studies show that up to 40% of students who have been diagnosed with a learning disability can be suffering from an undiagnosed visual impairment.

What's more, hearing impairment was found to be associated with attention problems, poorer school performance and, for boys in particular, behaviour issues. This is because those with hearing impairments can become frustrated and bored.

The Impact of Lockdowns on Vision

One significant consequence of the pandemic has been the surge in screen

time for leisure and online learning. Extended use of digital devices, combined with potential changes in daily routines, may contribute to vision-related issues among children. Prolonged screen exposure can lead to digital eye strain, causing symptoms like headaches, eye fatigue, and difficulty focusing. Parents and educators should be attentive to signs of discomfort and decreased visual acuity in children, as these may indicate underlying vision problems.

Hearing Challenges and Increased Headphone Use

The widespread adoption of online learning and leisure activities on digital devices has led to a surge in headphone usage among children. While headphones can provide an immersive audio experience, excessive use at high volumes may contribute to hearing impairment. Persistent exposure to loud sounds through headphones can damage delicate structures in the ear over time. Schools and parents should educate children on safe listening practices and monitor their headphone usage to prevent potential hearing issues.

Undiagnosed Vision and Hearing Impairments: A Barrier to Learning

Undiagnosed vision or hearing impairments can significantly impede a child's academic progress. These issues may manifest as difficulties in understanding instructional materials, participating in class activities, or completing assignments. Children with unidentified sensory impairments may struggle with tasks that rely heavily on visual or auditory cues, leading to frustration and a decline in academic performance. It is crucial to recognise the potential impact of these challenges and take proactive measures to address them.

What Schools Can Do

1. **Regular Vision and Hearing Screenings:** Schools should implement routine vision and hearing screenings for all students. These screenings can help identify potential issues early on, allowing for timely intervention.
2. **Promote Eye Health Education:** Educate students, teachers, and parents about the importance of eye health. Encourage regular breaks during screen time, proper lighting conditions, and the 20-20-20 rule (looking at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes) to reduce eye strain.

3. **Raise Awareness on Safe Listening Habits:** Schools can conduct awareness campaigns on safe listening practices, emphasising the importance of controlling headphone volume and taking breaks to prevent hearing damage.

4. **Collaboration with Healthcare Professionals:** Establish partnerships with healthcare professionals, such as optometrists and audiologists, to provide comprehensive vision and hearing assessments for students. This collaboration can help identify and address sensory impairments effectively.

5. **Inclusive Teaching Strategies:** Implement inclusive teaching strategies that accommodate students with sensory impairments. This may include providing alternative formats for instructional materials, using auditory aids, or incorporating tactile learning methods.

Conclusion

As the education landscape continues to evolve, it is crucial to address the potential impact of increased screen time and headphone use on children's sensory health. Schools play a pivotal role in identifying and supporting students with undiagnosed vision or hearing issues. Through regular screenings, education, and collaboration with healthcare professionals, schools can create an environment that promotes optimal sensory health and ensures that no child is held back in their learning journey due to unidentified impairments.



Cross-Curricular Days



Annabel Bunce, Senior Deputy Head, Mayfield School, East Sussex.

At Mayfield we are very lucky to embrace the best of both worlds: having a very distinct Lower School to offer a small, nurturing environment for our Year 7 and 8 pupils, but also having the freedom and opportunities to use and harness the facilities that come with being part of a senior school. This allows us to create a bespoke education tailored to the individual needs of the girls. Our Lower School Curriculum aims to instil a love of learning by offering an engaging and inspiring curriculum, that equips the girls with the necessary skills to meet the needs of the age.

At the heart of the Year 7 and 8 curriculum is the Mayfield Lower School Diploma which is built on a vision centred on four key principles; Responsibility, Curiosity, Collaboration and Creativity linked together by our overarching sense of faith as a Catholic School. As part of the Diploma the girls make a formal record of their learning both inside and outside the classroom. Through engagement in lessons, the vast extra-curricular programme, ambitious cross-curricular days, school trips and days of recollection the girls will learn more about themselves and about others in the wider community, both local and global.

Education of the whole person is essential if we are to give the girls the necessary skills to thrive. In addition to a first-class academic education, we want the girls to focus on the importance of soft skills so they can develop the personal attributes and qualities that will make them confident, reflective, empathetic and successful world citizens. As a school we give the girls an excellent education – giving them the quantifiable ‘hard skills’ that are very easily defined and evaluated in terms of our excellent GCSE and A

Level results. Yet I was finding that with the many and varied pressures of the modern world, many girls were increasingly driven to be perfectionists – with a fear of failing, or a desire to be given the ‘right answer’ to go away and learn. Whilst we are never going to get rid of the phrase – ‘do we need to learn this for the exam?’ – ‘it is on the specification?’ etc. I firmly believe that we need to do all we can to help them see the value of learning for learning’s sake, as well as developing the ability to see links and relevance between subjects. This goes hand in hand with developing soft skills. These interpersonal ‘people’ skills – communication, listening, empathy, problem solving, creativity, teamwork, resilience etc are much harder to define, but no less valuable.

This is a long process – you cannot teach resilience and teamwork overnight! But the idea behind the Mayfield cross-curricular days was to create opportunities that will enhance and promote the development of these soft skills, in conjunction with a memorable day. A day spent ‘outside the box’, learning something new or doing something different which still has an educational value at its core. When one thinks back to one’s own



education what do you remember? I remember spending several days building a paper straw bridge that had to span the length of the classroom whilst being strong enough to carry a model car. I remember designing and planting a ‘garden in a tray’, another day spent canoeing over the lake and cooking marshmallows on an island in the middle of Windermere. I therefore tasked the Mayfield teachers to come up with a series of days that would enthuse the girls, allow them to see the links between different subjects whilst also importantly building their interpersonal skills. My excellent teaching staff did not disappoint and here is just a flavour of some of the cross curricular days that the girls enjoy as part of the Mayfield Year 7 and 8 education.

Psychology Day

This day aimed at ensuring the girls discovered more about themselves as humans! They learnt about the workings of the brain including how we perceive the world through experiencing optical illusions and real-life applications such as the viral blue/black dress controversy. Pupils looked into the importance of sleep, especially for adolescents and participated in experiments about conformity and memory, allowing understanding of their own behaviours in a fun interactive way. They also discussed moral dilemmas, using critical analysis to identify fake studies, discover how we ‘eat with our eyes’ in a jelly taste test, experienced the difficulties of mirror drawing and attempted to analyse each other’s

handwriting. The day culminated in a visit from illusionist Adam Smith – a treat for both staff and students alike!

21st Century Parenting

The 21st century Parenting Day saw the girls create links between Biology, RS, History of Art and RSE! The day started with the girls learning about psychologist Diana Baumrind’s research into Parenting Styles (Authoritarian, Permissive, Authoritative, Neglectful, Over-Involved). In groups they then analysed a series of parenting scenarios to relate these to the standard psychological models. They then applied their new understanding to interpretation of four artworks drawn from different centuries representing different family dynamics, and historical contexts. They also learnt how to put together a weekly meal plan, had a talk from a practising midwife and even looked at how animals’ parent in the wild!

Taste of Spain

The ‘Taste of Spain’ day had the girls working in groups to research and create a presentation about festivals, music, artists, and typical food in two Spanish regions, Andalusia and Catalonia. They produced a mosaic creation depicting work inspired by Picasso, Dalí, Miró and Gaudí, learnt two traditional songs, as well as the basic steps of ‘sardana’, a group dance

which is performed in the streets of Catalonia. They also learnt how to create the rhythm in flamenco by clapping and playing ukuleles before finally gathering together to present their research and perform their song and dance to the whole year group.

Olympics: Ancient and Modern

The girls delved into the historical evolution of the Games before being organised into country-based groups. Each group researches their assigned country, learning about the culture, flag, food, traditions, religion,





and sport/leisure interests. This interdisciplinary approach seamlessly integrates Classical Civilisation, Geography, PE, Art and Textiles. The pupils channel their creativity into designing their own Olympic mascots, kits, and events to represent their countries. The culmination of the day is a mini Olympics, complete with an opening ceremony, spirited competition across various events, and a closing awards ceremony.

Cookie Project

The Cookie Project is an ‘Apprentice’ style competition with the girls being divided into teams and tasked with designing, marketing and making a cookie. The warm up activity is a cookie tasting session where the teams have to consider the appearance, taste, texture and market appeal of six different cookies. Following this they are allocated roles: the bakers tasked with making the cookie, the designers, responsible for the packaging and a promotional photograph and the marketers, in charge of writing the advert and sales pitch. Communication between different parts of the teams was essential and in true Apprentice style this doesn’t always go to plan! In the afternoon, the teams come back together to film their advert and practise their ‘pitch’ before presenting to the judges.



Sustainability Day

The girls built wormeries that will help make compost for the school estate, explored food sourcing and transportation and designed an eco-friendly Mayfield Menu using seasonal produce that can be sourced within 30 miles of Mayfield. They also listened to two visiting speakers. Laura Russell, a local dairy farm owner, who shared her family’s journey towards sustainable farming, and Melanie Siggs, global sustainability expert in Forestry, Farming and Sustainable Seafood.



These off timetable cross curricular days are not only thoroughly enjoyed by the girls, but they also give them valuable insights into the need for teamwork, negotiation and resilience. Comments from this year’s Year 7 and 8 pupils on what they learnt most from the days show just how much they benefit from the experience:

‘running a business requires teamwork and capability to make hard decisions in difficult situations’

‘that mistakes can be fixed!’

and finally

‘if people cooperate more, everything would be faster’

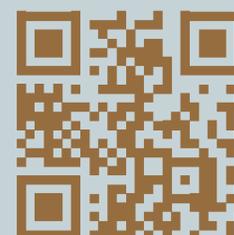
Useful words of wisdom that I think everyone would benefit from listening to!



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Dr Christopher Halls, Head of Early Years, Dulwich Prep London

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