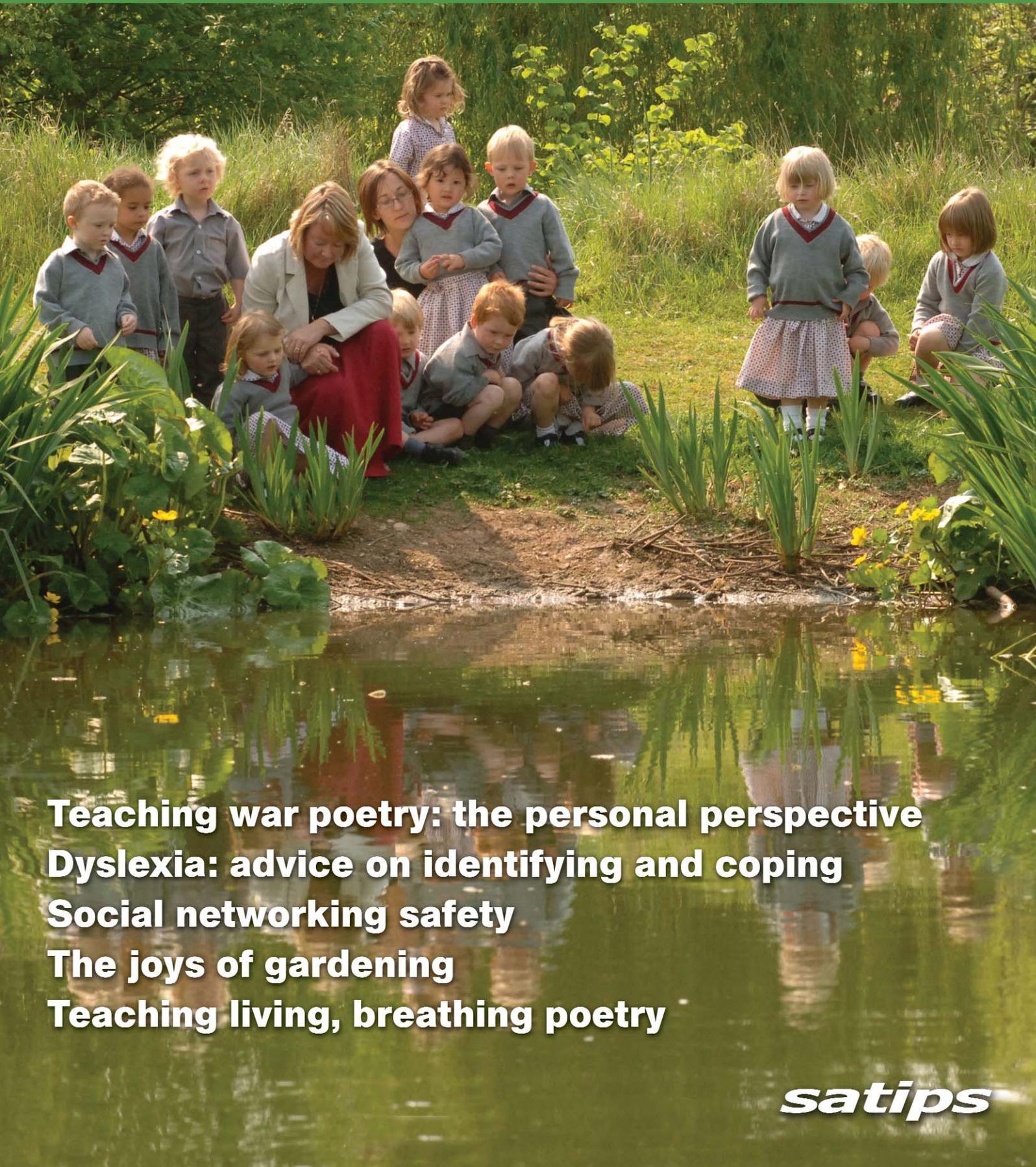


Spring Term 2011 • Issue 70

Prep School

Reflecting the best in the prep and junior school world



Teaching war poetry: the personal perspective

Dyslexia: advice on identifying and coping

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satips
support and training in prep schools

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From the editor

Happy New Year! To start 2011, we are focusing on unusual or innovative approaches to familiar subjects: from Latin to literature via the liberation afforded by the great outdoors.

Of course, one of the reasons why schools in the independent sector can take such unfamiliar approaches is that we are not ruled by policy changes decided at Westminster. It is interesting to note that the coalition Government is now talking about yet another change to the state education system. This time the aim seems to be to go back to something that the independent sector has never moved away from and has been doing well for years: a strong focus on academic subjects.

With all those years of experience, of course, schools in our sector are well aware of the importance of ensuring that a focus on academic subjects does not exclude the full range of non-academic subjects. We know the importance of a full and varied timetable in creating successful independent learners and rounded individuals.

It is helpful to know what is going on in the maintained sector so that we can answer questions from parents and make up our own minds about the right course to take. It is also useful because it reminds us how lucky we are to be sheltered from the constantly shifting wind of educational change that blows on the state sector. As independent schools, we are able to pursue tried and tested methods while still being free to take up new ideas that we feel will benefit our pupils. The personalised learning we provide helps our students. It also challenges us as teachers. It makes us look beyond politics and encourages us to decide which innovations are worth holding on to as the storm approaches.

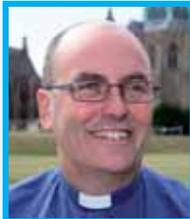
At the start of a year, when I feel sure we will all be asked to cut our spending, I'd like to encourage you to look upon austerity measures as real opportunities. Educational richness can spring from creative solutions to budgetary restraint. Why not share resources with teachers from other schools? Or set up regular meetings with other local teachers to pool ideas and share good practice? I urge you to seek creative solutions rather than offering defensive excuses.

On a personal note, might I say a huge thank you for all your lovely messages about the last issue? I am thrilled to be welcomed into such a warm and passionate community. Always remember, though, that this is your publication. So remember us in your New Year's resolutions: get in touch and contribute. We always love to hear from you.

Michèle Claire Kitto

If you have an idea for an article or viewpoint for the next issue of Prep School, or any news from your school, please don't hesitate! Email me at editor@prepschoolmag.co.uk

A thought for the term



The Revd Kim Taplin is an Anglican priest and is the Chaplain of Clifton College, Bristol. He has taught religious studies and games in four independent and maintained schools.

A Pilgrimage of Progress?

We tend to think of time as linear. The past is behind us and the future lies in a straight line ahead. As each day passes, we keep pace with time as we take further steps along our journey in life.

We tend to view progress similarly, as a steady movement forward which cannot be arrested. So, every scientific, technological and social development or change is automatically perceived as an 'advance'. We are continually reminded, "You cannot halt the march of progress."

Is this understanding of progress correct? Should we always embrace the changes which are taking place in our society as if they are necessarily an improvement and morally good? The problem is that the moment such reservations are aired, the accusation of 'Luddite' is mercilessly fired in the direction of the doubter.

Ironically, the questioner may not be at all motivated by imprisoning the present in the past; rather, she may be concerned with liberating the future so that women and men may become more fully human in the image of God. (Genesis 1.27)

Our culture greedily and undiscerningly scoffs the sweeties of novelty and change. We need to develop the social maturity to assess so-called advances and to be courageous enough, on occasions, to say, 'No, thank you. Even though we can carry out that cutting-edge technique or apply that new technology, we choose not to do so because we do not believe that it represents moral, spiritual or social progress for humanity.'

A simple test to evaluate whether change is progressive or regressive is to ask, "Does it dehumanise us, or does it enable us to flourish in the image of God?"

An adapted version of the North American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's *Serenity Prayer* may help us:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I should not change;
courage to change the things I should;
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Clifton College's Chaplain, Kim Taplin

EYPS in an Independent school

Alison Webber, Early Years manager at The Croft Preparatory School, Stratford upon Avon, shares her training experiences within the Early Years...



In 2007 the Labour government announced its intention to have graduate leaders in every day care setting by 2015. Early Years Professional Status was introduced to give staff working in nurseries, crèches and schools an opportunity to become graduate leaders.

I work at The Croft Preparatory School in Stratford upon Avon. An Early Years specialist, I have 15 years' teaching experience, mostly in reception, and have been the Early Years manager for the last four. When a leaflet about Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) arrived at our school last year, I

discounted it at first. I didn't really think it was relevant to me, as I was already a qualified and experienced Early Years teacher.

It was another member of the Early Years team who picked up on the idea of training for EYPS. Gemma, my deputy, who worked primarily with our three-year-olds, signed up for training with a national network and embarked on a route to EYPS called the 'Validation Pathway'. Given the qualifications she already had and her experience of working with children of different ages, Gemma was able to complete the course in three months.

As her training progressed we talked about her experience of the course and I began to appreciate the scale of changes across Early Years since I qualified. I also realised that I had become very specialised working with four-and-five-year-olds and had little experience with 0-3 year-olds, other than as a mother. Perhaps EYPS was a lot more relevant than I had first thought.

Meanwhile, my colleague's experience of training with her course provider had not been as favourable as anticipated, so I began researching alternative locations in which to train.

Whilst the last thing I had envisaged was becoming a student again, Worcester University has an excellent reputation for its education department, and its EYPS course was to be run by Rory McDowall Clark, a prolific Early Years author.

Becoming a student again

I began my EYPS course at Worcester University in January and was heartened to find that many of the others training were also 'mature' students seeking to update their knowledge. We were given a recommended reading list at the first session and I began reading *Working with Babies and Children From Birth to Three* (Nutbrown & Page) in earnest. It was inspirational, recognising the transience of practice within Early Years in the last decade, giving a historical background as well as detailing practical examples of good practice with 0-3 year-olds.

Although host to twice-weekly 'Baby and Toddler' sessions, The Croft Preparatory School admits children from age two, so I knew I needed to gain experience with babies for my training elsewhere. I arranged visits to a local daycare nursery to gain further experience with 0-3 year-olds. I was very nervous on my first visit, when I spent time in the baby room. I felt that I was on a training placement again, and the experience has made me more appreciative of how students,



and indeed staff, can feel when they come to our setting to work for the first time.

I needn't have worried though. The team couldn't have made me more welcome, or been more helpful. Within minutes of arriving, I was helping to organise an outing for the babies, helping to organise prams and baby slings. It was a fantastic experience. For a simple pram outing, I couldn't believe the preparations necessary – risk assessment, register, medication, drinks cups, and that was before each baby had their nappy changed and was dressed into winter clothing.

Mealtime after the walk was an experience too – food was blended by the staff, served to the child's individual need for sloppy/more textured food, with each baby sitting in their own low, but real 'chair' at a group table. Each child was encouraged to feed themselves as far as possible. Nothing like the rows of highchairs with staff spoon-feeding I had imagined.

Whilst a very different setting from The Croft Preparatory School, there were many similarities and staff openly shared their thoughts and practices with me. I, in turn, could share my experience with them. One of the main things I realised from my visits is that nurseries are no longer 'safety deposits' for babies, but places where babies are treated as individuals and are given a wealth of opportunities and experiences which broaden their world.

During my training, I also made frequent visits to a local children's centre. One wouldn't perhaps think that a teacher from an independent prep school has anything to learn from a Government-funded Children's Centre situated in a deprived area, but I soon discovered this is a short-sighted view. The members of staff at the centre were incredibly helpful, and introduced me to new practices which I subsequently implemented very successfully in our school toddler sessions.

My university sessions continued and each time I left inspired with new ideas to try back at school. Rory McDowall Clark shared anecdotes of good (and not so good) practice as examples, and students in my group, who were from contrasting Early Years settings across several counties, shared their ideas and examples as well.

Gateway review

Talk to anyone who has attended EYPS training and the one thing they will comment on is the 'Gateway Review', often in a negative way. "It was horrendous. The worst experience of my life", someone who trained with another provider told me, recounting



how her friend had fainted and another had been physically sick because the experience was so dreadful. At Worcester University, this was not the case.

The Gateway Review is essentially a formative review of your ability as a practitioner. It is a chance to showcase the sorts of skills you use in your everyday work, dealing with staff, parents and children. It consisted of four exercises and a written reflection. The exercises were a written response to specific scenarios, a group presentation, a role play interview with an actor and a personal interview. Although naturally a little nervous, I felt well prepared on the day, thanks to

comprehensive training. The written feedback I received afterwards has been very useful in identifying areas for personal and professional development and in no way affects the final awarding of EYP Status.

Written tasks formed a large part of the final assessment. There were seven assignments, four of maximum 2000 words, and three of maximum 750 words. In each I had to demonstrate both my leadership and personal practice and compare them with a list of 39 standards.

Assessment visits

An assessment visit formed another part of the final assessment. For this, a trained assessor came to visit The Croft to confirm that I do indeed lead Early Years practice and that I have implemented everything I wrote about in my assignments. For verification the assessor interviewed three witnesses, nominated by me. The visit, although intense, was an excellent chance to demonstrate everything I have

implemented in Early Years.

The final part of my assessment was an A4 file, where I compiled evidence of my day-to-day work against the 39 standards. Evidence included annotated photographs, copies of emails, letters, documents and testimonials.

Benefits and conclusions

I have talked a lot about the personal benefits of completing the EYPS course, but there is also benefit to the school. Take the following example: there are two local prep schools, each offering education for under-fives, with very little difference between them materially. At one, the Early Years Manager and other members of staff have Early Years Professional Status; at the other, staff are trained teachers, but qualified some years ago. Parents want the very best education for their children; which setting will they choose?

My colleague and I have both improved practice in Early Years

during and since our EYPS training. Parents are quick to notice improvements to provision and word travels quickly. What better way to sell Early Years provision at your school than by ensuring prospective parents are aware that key staff are Early Years Professionals? Our Early Years pupil numbers this year are healthier than ever, even in this difficult economic climate.

Whilst training for EYPS, I was eligible for a Local Authority grant which not only paid for cover while I attended university, but also enabled me to buy new resources, both of which benefited the school.

So was it worth doing EYPS training? Definitely. I learned so much and it has been of tremendous benefit to the school with improved practices, new ideas and better links with the community. It has enabled me to build on my past experience and also to develop new skills, giving me the confidence and ability to lead practice, inspiring others along the way.



Teaching War poetry: the personal perspective

Dr Matthew Jenkinson, head of English and history at New College School, Oxford, shares a moving family story to help illustrate World War I poetry to his class

Poetry from World War I remains, rightly, a staple of the prep school pupil's literary diet. Yet pupils and teachers can confront significant difficulties when addressing such a powerful genre. How can teachers encourage their charges to look beyond syllable-counting or alliteration-spotting to appreciate the moving and profound messages of the poems? How can pupils feel an emotional connection to the experiences of generations they are increasingly unlikely to meet? How can any of us comprehend the sheer number of casualties and deaths, without treating them as little more than a numbers game? One solution I have found is to approach World War I through the experience of one of my relatives, to show how 'close to home' Ypres or the Somme actually were.

Albert Timms, my great uncle, was born in 1897 to Harry and Emily Timms in Oxford. He grew up in Summertown, an area where a number of my pupils live and close to the school where I teach. He went to



school a short walk from my own school and he worked in Underhill's, a grocery store three or four streets away. Three of the four photos we have of Albert show him at prep school age – wide-eyed and innocent. Taking into account the change in fashion since the early 1900s, he does not look much different from the pupils I teach.

The fourth and last photo we have of him shows Albert in military uniform, at the age of 18, about to head to the front line. His eyes have changed significantly. They now betray anxiety and fear. The boy who had walked the same streets as my pupils, who may have known their grandfathers or great-grandfathers, was now a soldier about to embark on the terrifying experience of trench warfare. Many of the documents concerning Albert's fate were kept by my great-grandfather and I have scanned them into a PowerPoint presentation. As they progress through the documents concerning Albert's experiences, my pupils are able to build an emotional connection with someone who looked and acted like them, who lived and learnt where they live and learn.

Albert served in the 2/4th Ox and Bucks light infantry. He was in action in France for six months before he was first wounded, on 1st July 1916. News of his injuries was reported in the

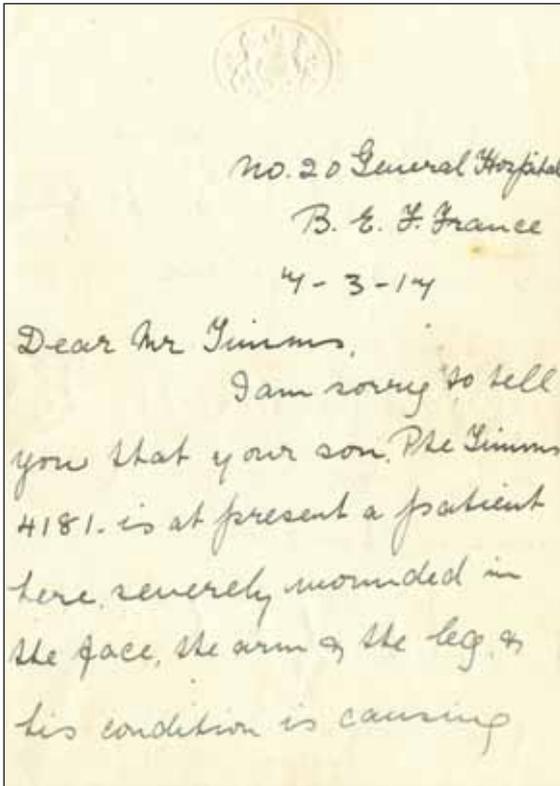
Oxford Times, alongside notices of those Oxford men who had died and, with sombre irony, a recruitment advertisement for the Navy. Albert recovered from these wounds and continued life as a runner in the trenches until about four months after the Battle of the Somme.

In early 1917, Albert was stationed in Ablaincourt, just south of the Somme.

He had just returned to France following a brief period at home on leave. According to G.K. Rose, author of *The Story of the 2/4th Ox and Bucks Light Infantry* (1920), Albert's trench during the morning and afternoon of 28 February 1917 was 'fine and ominously quiet'. At 16.15 this tranquillity was disturbed by a bombardment of German grenades and mortar-fire targeting support trenches. Having checked the front line, Albert was able to report to Rose that, despite heavy German actions against the flanks, the wire had not been compromised and there was no sign of an attack. The bombardment subsided and quiet returned.

At dusk, the situation turned dramatically for the worse. Rifle shots and shouts rang through the trench as a German raiding party threw bombs into Albert's dug-out. Many of the bombs exploded before they reached the bottom of the trench stairs, and they were of a relatively small size, so





Albert and others in the trench were not killed instantly. They were, however, thrown into a confused frenzy as the trench filled with gas. One week later, on 7th March 1917, Matron Hills of No. 20 General Hospital, Dannes-Camiers, sat down to inform her patients' families of their conditions. One of her patients was a young man named Albert Timms. During the German raid he had been 'wounded in the face, the arm & the leg'. His injuries were causing her a 'great deal of anxiety', especially that to his face because his lower jaw had been fractured. This was confirmed by a telegram which was sent reporting Albert's 'dangerously ill' condition. Matron Hills promised to update my great-grandfather daily with news of Albert's condition.

On 16th March 1917, she was called upon to deliver the worst possible news. At six o'clock that morning, Albert's condition had begun to deteriorate rapidly. At 11.20, he passed away.

No matter how many times I give this lesson, I still find it extremely difficult to read out the second letter from the

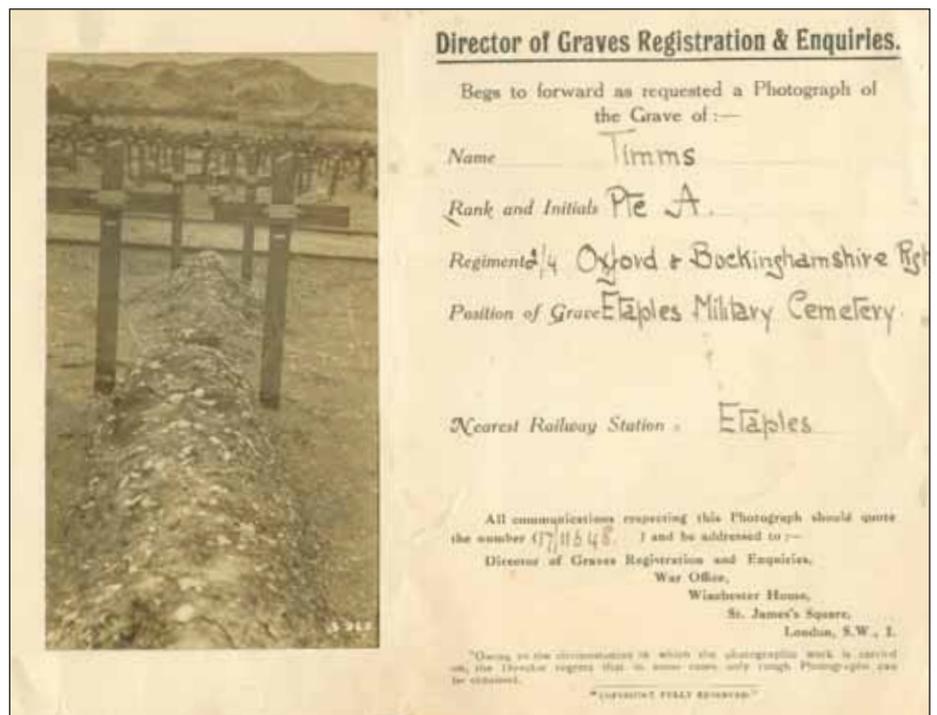
matron. The respectful, solemn silence in the classroom, and the number of moist eyes, are suggestive of pupils who feel the profound sadness of a life which began just like theirs, but was cut tragically short.

As Albert was buried in the Etaples military cemetery, letters of condolence began to arrive at his childhood home in Summertown. These have all been kept and they are suggestive of the ways in which families back home tried to reconcile themselves to the deaths of their young sons, brothers, grandsons and friends. My great-grandfather, Harry, had very recently lost his wife, so the time was particularly traumatic for

him and the condolence letters often addressed this double loss. Albert's brother-in-law, Will Wood, wrote from HMS Chatham about his grief and a particularly troubling coincidence: the telegrams reporting Albert's wounds and death arrived just as Harry had received a letter from Albert 'full of joy and hope'. Sadly, this final letter sent

home by Albert is not part of the archive – it was sent on to Harry's other son, Ralph, who struggled to come to terms with his brother's death. 'I still hope there's a mistake somewhere', he wrote in a brief but heartfelt letter. 'God's will be done', Ralph signed off.

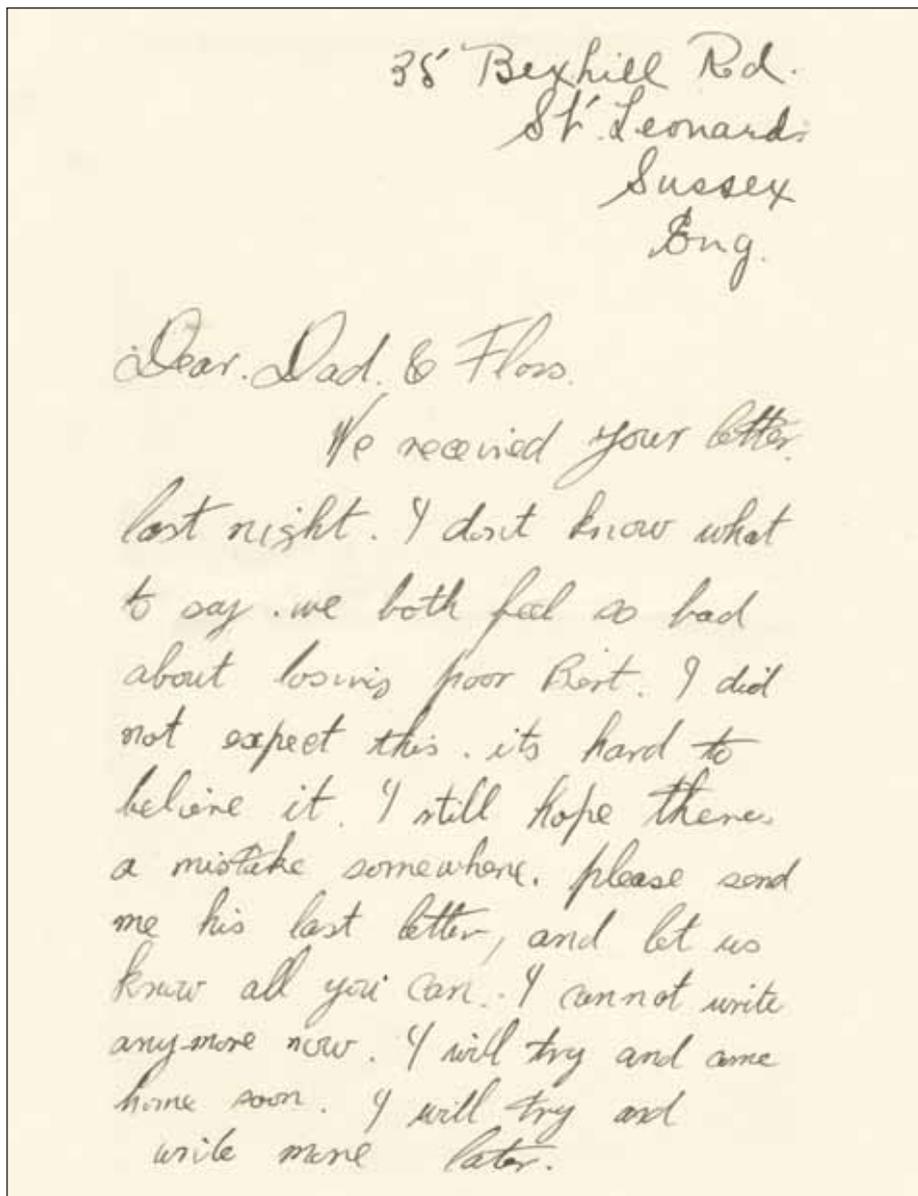
Indeed, it is important to note the prevalence of religious faith in the letters, as people tried to come to terms with the thousands upon thousands of deaths. Will Wood deliberately sent no sympathy to his father-in-law: 'Sympathy would be out of place on such an occasion as it is God's will and He knows best'. Will's wife, Albert's sister, took comfort in the fact that 'we shall all meet again in heaven'. 'We must leave it to God', reflected two family friends, 'He knows what is best for us ... think of Him who laid down his life for us'. Albert had given his life on the 'field of duty', and Harry had sacrificed 'his' Albert. Mr Thompson comforted Harry with the thought that Albert was 'not lost, only gone before'. A good number took comfort in scripture (John XV, xiii): 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'.



Other letters tried to find something positive in Albert's premature passing. A Mr Strange suggested that Albert was a 'martyr' and a 'hero'; one family friend took comfort in the fact that Albert had 'answered his country's call'. Mr Beasley lamented the loss of 'so many bright young lives', and suggested that 'the thoughtful man cannot but hate wars and all the makers thereof'. Another acquaintance encouraged Harry to 'look for the 'silver lining' which is behind every cloud', to 'wait for a future date' before he could see the 'good reason' why Albert was taken. 'He gave all for his country, and what finer death is there for a man?' Another friend commended Albert as 'clean living and gallant', and encouraged Harry to be proud that his son had 'laid down his life for the noblest cause which ever claimed the sacrifice of the nation's heroes'.

The most interesting letter we have was written on Easter Day 1917 by Albert's childhood friend, Frank. Albert and Frank grew up on the same street in Summertown and they signed up for the army together. Frank's letter of condolence is significant because it was written in the trenches and the leaves are bound by a pin which was rusted by the wet conditions. Here pupils are able to see, read and feel a genuine artefact from the front line. Frank was determined that his young friend had given his life 'for a Noble and Righteous cause'. He had 'proved to be a Man' and his soul would 'live on in peace, where war is not known'. Frank promised Harry that he would put flowers on Albert's grave, as a last sign of respect to his 'gallant comrade'.

With Albert's narrative in place, it is natural in the lesson to turn from this real front-line story to poetry from World War I. Wilfred Owen's *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is an obvious choice as, in the spirit of the lesson, it fuses images from the front line with those from life back home. Albert was one of those many thousands who, for Owen, were denied the pealing bells and mourning choirs of funerals in



their churches in England's shires. Instead, their funeral prayers were delivered rapidly by the 'stuttering rifles' rapid rattle' and the choir was not a church choir, but that of 'wailing shells'. Yes, alliteration, onomatopoeia and the like are relevant to the way Owen conveys his message. But with an individual, relevant, real-life story to accompany the poem, pupils can look beyond the mechanical annotation of stylistic devices. They can feel, as well as analyse, the poem.

Albert's story was one of twenty individual stories of men who died during the Ablaincourt raid on 28th February 1917. It was one of over 8.5 million individual stories which ended

in death between 1914 and 1918. The total number of deaths in World War I is incomprehensible, especially to those meeting the immense numbers for the first time. By looking at just one individual we can get closer to appreciating the experience of each one of those who died. Wilfred Owen's portrayal of a gas attack in *Dulce Et Decorum Est* has even greater credence if pupils can see actual gas attacks like the Ablaincourt raid which led to Albert's death. The boys in my classroom are able to empathise more readily with the terrifying experience of war by looking at the story of someone who, within ten years of his schoolboy photos, was on the front line, making the ultimate sacrifice.

satips and the future

Chairman Jan Rickman shares the vision of *satips* and invites you to get involved with an organisation that is for teachers and supports teachers in the prep and junior school world

Given the ever-changing world, *satips* must look to the future. *satips* over the years has provided useful, detailed and innovative information, ideas and training to the prep school community. We have been a publishing house and an information hub. Our challenge today, though, is how *satips* needs to provide its core products.

As chairman of *satips* my key role is to set the agenda and coax the future direction from our members, users and officers. This is no easy feat as everyone has an opinion; some like what we do, some want change and some just don't really know!

In my role of setting the future agenda my critical task is to ensure that *satips* meets our users' needs, sets a standard that others want to emulate and ensures that *satips* is fit, healthy and prospering over the next ten years. It is also noticeable that the ever-changing technological society we live in is transforming the very nature of where information lives and how it is accessed. *satips* needs to be at the very forefront of the use of new technology in the educational sector.

I also think that *satips* has a place in lobbying decision-makers in our sector, a role that I am keen to see developed. I want *satips* to have plenty to say about learning and to be out there saying it.

As chairman I have listened to the thoughts and ideas of many of you and I have also been to commercial consultants to help me and Council develop a new, exciting and robust *satips* Vision.

In launching the Vision below, I wish to invite you to join in the exciting

new future direction that *satips* will take; I also invite you to talk to me directly with any thoughts or ideas on how we can make this Vision come to life.

satips Vision

Our purpose

To provide the support that teachers want and need in order to create the very best learning environments for children.

Our goal

To be the worldwide hub for information, ideas and best practice for prep school education.

Values:

1. Whatever we do, we do it because it is right and good.
2. We always create and add value.
3. To be a community.

What that is: a vivid description

A holistic education is the way for the future. *satips* wants to support the creation of schools where every child, every teacher, every assistant wants to go to school. *satips*, therefore, sits at the very heart of creating a network of educators where everyone has access to the very best ideas, innovations, concepts, development and assistance. No teacher will ever be able to say, "I did not have easy access"; instead, every teacher will say, "I can get what I need to be the very best I can".

satips will be universally recognised as the hub of developing new resources in education. To be part of *satips* will mean being recognised as a dedicated, professional, reflective educator of children.

We will be a community where friendship and help are at the heart of developing skills, capability and making a difference in education.

We will be the model of professional development that everyone regards as the gold standard.

Ten years from now we will have influence, reputation and the capacity to persuade key decision-makers of our value at the very highest levels.

What it will mean for you, the user

satips will continue to provide our four core products:

1. Prep School magazine
2. Broadsheets
3. Continuous Personal Development (CPD) courses
4. Events for children

However, the Vision means that we want to develop these products to create more, better and tailored services and resources for you. We will also develop online information resources and utilise email and design new systems to provide up-to-the-minute information. In addition, we want to develop a series of targeted CPD courses based on what you need, when you need it and where you want it.

These are exciting times for *satips*. I want to utilise our history and expertise whilst pushing forward into the future - no easy task, but one that I am looking forward to.

Please do contact me directly with any ideas, thoughts, suggestions, courses you want, or feedback at chair@satips.com.

Joined-up thinking: is Common Entrance outdated?

Over the past 40 years preparatory school education has improved to such an extent that the children going up to senior schools are now far more rounded citizens with a broader-based education and a more fully developed range of skills. Despite this, the Common Entrance examination is considered by many to be outdated. This is not a new idea: I am old enough to remember the 'Beer Committee', which met to discuss different possible ways for pupils to move from prep school to senior school. At the time, I followed the arguments around the various different ideas with interest. But ideas they remained and, years later, we are no further on.

The Common Entrance examination remains firmly focused, in many cases, on learning facts. This contrasts with the current Key Stage 3 curriculum which emphasises the development of a child's personal, thinking and learning skills in six specific areas: independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, teamwork, self-management and effective participation. While mastery of a subject will always be important, it should be clear that it is excellence in these skills that will help our children thrive in a changing world.

If we encourage serious, joined-up thinking amongst the stakeholders in our preparatory and senior schools, I think we can create a new framework that will take our students from Year 7 to the end of Year 9 without the impediment of the Common Entrance examination. I believe that Common Entrance restricts the education currently being delivered in Years 7 and 8. Worse, it is often the case that even in Year 9, when the pupils have moved on to senior schools, there is an uneasy mixture of the old and the new. Pupils and teachers try to establish some progression but, in many cases, work is repeated and pupils fail to advance skills, knowledge or understanding.

There will be those who argue that Common Entrance is a convenient 'setting' exercise for the senior schools but we need to remember that many of the schools will have pre-tested children at 10- or 11-years-old. Indeed, if Heads, parents and teachers all communicate efficiently, no child should fail Common Entrance. What an indictment of our system that we have to use an old-fashioned examination for setting, and that the curriculum has to be planned for this.

It is time to develop a broad curriculum that can be followed up to the age of 14 and that is based on the six key skills mentioned earlier. This is something that the Independent Association of Prep Schools, the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference, the Girls' Schools Association, *satips* and other independent school groups could work together to shape. This broadly-based education will help children develop the life skills and experience they need to

capitalise fully on their senior school opportunities as they move towards post-16 exams, university and the outside world. This new curriculum should include subjects matched to each pupil's interests and abilities up to the age of 16. At 16, a more specialist pathway should be followed, as now.

In our fast-moving world, children's social interactions and the skills they develop online are preparing them for their future employment in a way that is currently unexploited within most schools. The internet offers them a vast repository of information and the opportunity for independent learning. In short, schools are struggling to keep up with the new media environment. Any new curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 must accommodate this 'new media literacy'. It must give pupils a solid grounding in the information handling skills they will need to rely on during their school years and well beyond. An innovative approach to school work which looks seriously at media technology alongside social, cultural and economic changes would properly prepare our pupils for study at senior school level. This could all be taught through the present subjects.

The new school curriculum I am describing should be balanced. It should prepare children and young people for a successful future. It needs to be challenging, in-tune with contemporary life and aligned with a vision of what we want in the future. At present I believe our narrow, knowledge-based curriculum fails to inspire either teachers or pupils, and denies our young people the chance to develop the skills they will need for the future.

If our children and grandchildren are to be prepared for the post-14 educational experience, we need them to be well on the way to developing their full potential by the end of Year 9. One way forward might be for preparatory and senior schools to look jointly at the Junior IB syllabus as a model for future discussions. Whatever solution is found, we need to make sure that our students leave prep school with the confidence, aptitude and skills to tackle future exams but also with a broad understanding of all that is on offer to them and how best to use their opportunities. The time to rethink the way we examine pupils as they move to senior school is now. If we fail to change, we will be failing the next generation.

Paul Baker (MA, BSc, FRGS) taught for 38 years in both prep and senior independent schools before retiring from teaching in 2008. He is now professional tutor for the staff at New College School, Oxford; an ISI inspector; PGCE tutor for the University of Buckingham; and chair of the Geographical Association Independent Schools' Special Interest Group.

In and out of class

Professor John Gabbay has been a governor of Hordle Walhampton School for twelve years. In this article he gives a personal (and only slightly caricatured...) account of the experience



“So, you’ve finally sold out completely,” snorted my brother when I told him I had decided to become a governor of Hordle Walhampton Preparatory School (or *Prepare a Tory School* as he – then the chairman of an inner city comprehensive school – would probably call it). I knew better. I changed the subject to whether we could win the Premiership without Cantona.

As children in Manchester our only experience of boarding school was as a threat (albeit an idle one) when we misbehaved at home. Consequently we were the happy products of state primary schools followed by the now extinct direct grant scheme. However, when I had found that my own children were clearly being held back in their local schools I had allowed my desire for their welfare to outweigh my class prejudices. Shrugging off an earlier version of the same fraternal disapproval, I had moved my son to Hordle House, a small, friendly prep school sitting on windswept



Hampshire cliffs. His experience there was more than enough to justify the switch to the private sector.

What persuaded me above all that it had been the right decision was the Headmaster, Henry Phillips – a class act if ever I saw one – and the dedication and sheer skill of the staff. They had done an undeniably splendid job. So when some years later Henry, now Head of the recently merged Hordle Walhampton School, asked me to become a governor I felt it would be ungracious to decline, especially as there had been some (wholly unjustified, in my view) ructions about the merger and I wanted to show my support for him and his wife Jackie. And anyway I was

curious about the inner workings of this alien world of the boarding prep school.

There is plenty of advice on the duties and expectations surrounding governorship, ranging from government inspectorates focusing on one’s legal requirements (eg www.isi.net or www.dcsf.gov.uk) to guidance on one’s statutory duties as a trustee of a charity (www.charity-commission.gov.uk) to general summaries (www.theisba.org.uk) as well as courses run by the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (www.agbis.info) and others.

The publications all look highly intimidating, especially when one has yet to have any experience of the actual task. Fortunately I didn’t read them beforehand because I probably wouldn’t have agreed to take it on. With hindsight, however, what they all boil down to is reminding you that this is a responsibility that you need to take seriously without unduly interfering in the actual running of the school.

Your role as a governor is not to manage the school, but instead to ensure that it is being properly managed. That is easier said than done, since it means keeping a weather eye on everything from the quality of teaching and resources to the finances and the pupil numbers; from the ethos of care and moral guidance to the proper maintenance of the buildings, from the marketing strategy to bursaries and special fundraising projects; from ensuring due compliance with the law on charities, education and employment to making sure the parents have a friendly ear when they have a point to make.

Perhaps above all it is about supporting the staff (and most particularly the Head and the bursar/business manager) as they grapple with the sometimes exasperating day to day managerial and personnel problems that beset any organisation from time to time. Fortunately I found that you don’t have to do all of these yourself because a good board of governors is designed to have the range of skills to share the tasks between them.

All this, however, was in the future when – almost literally the new boy in school, but more perplexed than any child – I walked across the magnificent grounds to join my first meeting in the imposing Victorian boardroom. It was instantly clear that I had entered a group the like of which I had never before experienced. My brother was right; what

on earth was I doing here? Thank goodness, I mused, that I knew something of the ways of anthropologists; because I had just found myself in a completely unknown culture.

My fellow governors, who included millionaire businessmen, government advisers, landed gentry, top barristers, and Heads of successful public schools, spoke a different language. They talked about matters I knew nothing of as they discussed in strangely coded accents the finer details of Common Entrance and scholarships, of the charities commission, of SORP and EFYS. They glowed about (of all things) rigger, hockey and horse riding; they enthused about boarding, my old childhood bogey, and how it was great fun and needed to be encouraged. And they spoke constantly of places I guessed I was expected to know but didn't. I kept quiet.

OK, like everyone, I at least knew about Eton and Harrow (just as well, since the Head had been to one and a subsequent chair of our Board had been to the other) and I had friends who'd been to Winchester. But what and where were all those other places of which my new fellow governors spoke so fondly? Radley, Sherborne, Bryanston, Canford, Clayesmore, Downe House... It was time I found out, I realised, because these were the places that our pupils were being expertly prepared for, gaining scholarships to, and often entering Oxbridge from. Such excellence, I knew as an academic who had worked in both those universities, was worth taking seriously.

Remarkably, though, Hordle Walhampton was equally excellent at helping its less intellectually gifted children, including those with special needs, who would never excel academically but whose other, sometimes unexpectedly, flowering talents were being lovingly nurtured. And the kids all looked so happy, even – nay, especially! – the boarders. So I threw aside my prejudices and started to go native.

Like all committee work, being on the Board entailed my having to understand the technical aspects (finances, curriculum, employment procedures, 'safeguarding' and so on) as well as the constitutional details of the role (how we select a new chair, what the due process is for selecting new governors, how to appoint a new Head – which AGBIS describes as the most important task for governors, but which I have luckily never had to engage in).

As always, there are also the unwritten rules of the game (how much should you get into the detail, when is the best time to speak out about something that concerns you, how hard dare you challenge the chair, how casually can you dress at the meeting without appearing disrespectful?). But on reflection, if the governors are doing their job properly they would not have invited you to join unless you have the generic skills that enable you to deal with such matters.

So after a while, even in this completely unfamiliar environment, I surprised myself by finding my way through the maze and realising how much I did have in common with the majority of the other governors (even if they didn't

follow football). Moreover – and whether it was because I was learning the new tribal cultures or because the board, under a new chair, was increasingly running its business more in the manner of the university and government committees I was used to – I found myself able to make the occasional helpful contribution. Indeed I now enjoy chairing one of the three main subcommittees.

Being a governor is a strategic and monitoring role that is one step away from the actual operation of the school, and yet you need to be sufficiently close to allow a realistic understanding of the issues. I quickly found, therefore, that it paid just to 'be around' informally from time to time, coming in on some pretext or other for a chat with the Head or the bursar or senior staff involved in aspects of the school where one has particular responsibility. In my case



for example this has recently been the new marketing director who is transforming how we do things, and with whom – oh the irony – I have been working on encouraging more pupils to board.

Best of all was the opportunity, much encouraged at Hordle Walhampton, for governors to spend an occasional day sitting at the back of classrooms, milling around the staff common room, standing on the touchline, and doing whatever it takes to experience the very feel of the school. Otherwise, without that feel, how can one give the right kind of constructively critical questioning tempered by unfailing support and encouragement that the school needs? It was all very well sitting in the Board room and commenting on plans, budgets and policies, but it was only by watching the teachers at work that I was finally able to appreciate just how much care and effort goes into making the school such a vibrant place for the children, and to value how well served they are. There was no hothouse pressure, no overambitious cramming, just kids enjoying their learning.

Of course there are teachers in my brother's comprehensive school who do an equally magnificent job in much tougher circumstances, and of course his children, and indeed my own step-children, have achieved impressive heights through the state system. But I've been sitting in and out of class, and I'm proud to be involved.

The Primary Latin Project and *Minimus*

Barbara Bell reflects on how the Primary Latin Project has developed over the last 12 years and how your school could get involved

The last 12 months have been an extraordinarily exciting time for *Minimus* and the Primary Latin Project. Twelve months ago, the Committee and I held our meeting at Vindolanda where the book is set; this was to celebrate sales of over 100,000 copies worldwide of the first book, *Minimus - Starting out in Latin*. We had a celebration dinner joined by local *Minimus* teachers from the North East and spent a wonderful day walking on Hadrian's Wall on the Sunday.

Last summer, my husband Nick and I spent two weeks in the USA at three



different venues (New York, Baltimore and Pittsburgh) enjoying a whole range of *Minimus* events that had been arranged by Cambridge University Press and two members of the committee, Ruth Ann Besse (Baltimore) and Zee Ann Poerio (Pittsburgh). During the time at Pittsburgh, *Minimus* celebrated his tenth birthday. On the actual day, I was teaching a taster lesson to a class of twenty children of different ages in a local school, watched by their parents and teachers. When we had finished the lesson, Zee Ann Poerio

had organised a birthday party to celebrate *Minimus's* tenth birthday. We sang Happy Birthday to him (in Latin of course), had balloons, birthday cake etc. Little did I think when I had the original idea of writing this book in 1994 that fifteen years later I would be celebrating *Minimus's* birthday in Pittsburgh!

The highlight of the year – and indeed of the whole project – was the award of my MBE by Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle in November. This was a very special day for me and my family and I am so grateful to the late Anne Chapman for recommending me for this award and for the many people who supported it. Her Majesty was delighted to hear that Latin is now 'cool' and that *Minimus* is being enjoyed all over the world. After the event I sent her a copy for her youngest grandchildren.

In July of this year I directed *Minimus the Musical* at my school (Clifton High School, Bristol). It has long been a dream to collaborate on this with Bristol composer Christopher Northam.

For those of you who may be considering using *Minimus*, I have set out some general advice below.

How do I get started?

If possible you should attend a training day. I run four or five per year on Saturdays and the cost is still only £50 for the day. Both state and independent schools can apply for a grant to help begin *Minimus*. Typically we give up to 50% of the start-up costs.



How can the Primary Latin Project support you?

Join the mailing list for free. Email the administrator nicolaprince99@hotmail.com, expressing your wish to be on the mailing list and giving permission to receive the newsletters by email. You will then receive two letters a year from me in which you will be kept up to date with the activities of the project – special events, new resources for teachers, etc.

Use the *Minimus* website, www.minimus.com. Training day application and grant fund forms can all be downloaded from the website. It also contains important information for teachers as well as games and interactive material for students. You may also find the Vindolanda website useful: www.vindolanda.com

You may like to attend a special *Minimus* event. We have held two



successful days at the British Museum and another at the York Museum. Any forthcoming events will be publicised on the website and in the newsletter.

You may like to set up a special *Minimus* event, eg a Latin reading competition or a Latin Play competition in collaboration with other teachers in your area. The PLP always hopes to support such events.

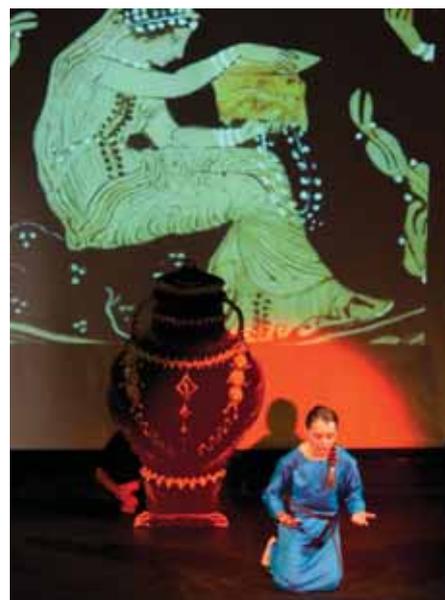
Invite me to visit your *Minimus* group. I always enjoy meeting the consumers and am prepared to travel throughout the country. I am also happy to do extended school visits; I am able to train your teachers responsible for delivering *Minimus*, or to train a cluster of teachers from your Local Authority. For some of these visits, there may be a charge but please contact me for a flyer detailing the costs and I will be happy to discuss your needs with you. Please note that your school will need to pay my travel expenses.

You may like to purchase some *Minimus et Cetera* products to support your work. MEC includes the sale of 'Mini books' – two sets, each available for £18 plus p&p. These are extra readers designed to give more reading material to our gifted & talented

children who are working at a quicker pace. There are also pens, pencils, rulers and rubbers and similar small products available. Apart from the children enjoying them, they make excellent prizes if you are holding competitions.

Make use of the Teachers' Resource Book. This is not cheap because one is paying for the photocopying rights for it. At the back of the teacher's book, there are thirty five photocopyable worksheets, which are ideal both in the classroom or as homework. It is an extremely useful resource particularly for non-specialist teachers. All the Latin is translated for you and there are answers to the exercises. There are cross-curricular teaching suggestions. I would also thoroughly recommend the use of the CD. This contains recordings of all the featured stories and is a valuable change of voice in the classroom.

At the request of children, *Minimus Secundus – Moving on in Latin* was published in 2004. This also has a Teachers' Resource Book and an accompanying CD (audio cassettes are available if you prefer this format). An Italian version of *Minimus* was published in 2007.



For all queries relating to *Minimus* and the activities of the Primary Latin Project, please do not hesitate to contact me, Mrs Barbara Bell, Director PLP, 82 Swiss Drive, Ashton, Bristol BS3 2RW. Tel: 0117 953 1819. www.minimus.com.

Barbara Bell is a teacher at Clifton High School and Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls, and director of the Primary Latin Project. bmbellmini@aol.com



Why is Gemma struggling with her reading?

Mary Mountstephen offers advice on identifying and coping with dyslexia

Is there something wrong with Gemma?

Will her reading ever improve?

Has something happened to make her like this?

Is it my fault she's like this?

In this article you will find information about one of a number of learning difficulties which are well-recognised as causing some children to underperform and underachieve in the classroom. Parents of children like Gemma may seek advice, information or reassurance from the school when they feel that she is not achieving as much as she should. When confronted with parents who want to know 'Is she dyslexic?' it's useful to have some information to hand.

Dyslexia: what is it?

The word 'dyslexia' comes from the Greek: 'dys', meaning *difficulty with*, and '-lexia', meaning *words or language*. Dyslexia affects many aspects of learning, not just reading and writing. Dyslexia is not related to intelligence, race or social background.

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. It is often thought of as a continuum, ranging from mild to severe, and there are no clear cut-off points. This has caused much disagreement over the years as to whether we can say that 'dyslexia' actually exists as a condition, as it can be difficult in some cases to reach a clear diagnosis because there are so many variables. However, when a child is experiencing continued difficulties in learning to read, investigations need to be made. Co-



If a child is experiencing difficulties in learning to read, investigations need to be made

occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organization, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia. One of the key concerns of dyslexia researchers has been the discrepancy between low reading performance and the good intellectual functioning of dyslexic children. Nicolson and Fawcett (2008) point to evidence that 'adults with dyslexia may be among the most successful and creative of their generation' as they develop the ability to compete under adverse conditions in school and are able to apply this determination in their professional life.

Is it common?

Figures vary widely on the percentage of people who have dyslexia. The

figures vary from 4-5 percent to up to 10 percent and above. One of the difficulties with being more precise about this is the wide definitions of dyslexia which exist and the wide range of symptoms that can be classified as 'dyslexic'.

When would I become aware of it and how?

Children are generally born with dyslexia, but it may remain undetected until the child starts school and begins to struggle with aspects of their learning. The link between early language and later reading ability suggests that it is possible to screen for dyslexia in children as young as five. The child with dyslexia is often at a disadvantage right from the start in school, as their strengths are not often in reading, writing, spelling and dealing with symbols. If a child shows

evidence of several of the indications outlined below, further investigation is needed before failure starts to affect self-esteem. The child may be dyslexic, or there may be other reasons for their difficulties. The list is taken from the very useful British Dyslexia Association website.

Persisting factors

There are many persisting factors in dyslexia, which can appear from an early age. They will still be noticeable when the dyslexic child leaves school.

These include:

Obvious 'good' and 'bad' days, for no apparent reason

Confusion between directional words, eg up/down, in/out

Difficulty with sequence, eg coloured bead sequence, later with days of the week or numbers

A family history of dyslexia/reading difficulties

Pre-school

Has persistent jumbled phrases, eg 'cobbler's club' for 'toddler's club'

Use of substitute words eg 'lampshade' for 'lamppost'

Inability to remember the label for known objects, eg 'table, chair'.

Difficulty learning nursery rhymes and rhyming words, eg 'cat, mat, sat'.

Later than expected speech development

Pre-school non-language indicators

May have walked early but did not crawl - was a 'bottom shuffler' or 'tummy wriggler'

Persistent difficulties in getting dressed efficiently and putting shoes on the correct feet

Enjoys being read to but shows no interest in letters or words

Is often accused of not listening or paying attention

Excessive tripping, bumping into things and falling over

Difficulty with catching, kicking or throwing a ball; with hopping and/or skipping

Difficulty with clapping a simple rhythm

Primary school age

Has particular difficulty with reading and spelling

Puts letters and figures the wrong way round

Has difficulty remembering tables, alphabet, formulae, etc

Leaves letters out of words or puts them in the wrong order

Still occasionally confuses 'b' and 'd' and words such as 'no/on'

Still needs to use fingers or marks on paper to make simple calculations

Poor concentration

Has problems understanding what he/she has read

Takes longer than average to do written work

Problems processing language at speed

Primary school age non-language indicators:

Has difficulty with tying shoe laces, tie, and dressing

Has difficulty telling left from right, order of days of the week, months of the year, etc

Surprises you because in other ways he/she is bright and alert

Has a poor sense of direction and still confuses left and right

Lacks confidence and has a poor self-image

Can both boys and girls have it?

It used to be thought that more boys than girls were dyslexic but it now appears that boys and girls are almost equally affected, but boys are more likely to be identified, perhaps as a result of other associated problems such as poor behaviour and frustration. Recent research suggests that dyslexia is only slightly more common (1.5 to 1) in boys than girls.

Is it inherited?

Researchers have been investigating the causes of dyslexia for many years and much has been written about this subject. Dyslexia tends to run in families - several genes contribute to a genetic risk of dyslexia; however this is not always the case.

Will it get better or worse? Can it be cured?

Dyslexia need not be a barrier to success and achievement if it is recognised and suitable teaching and other strategies are put in place. All children can benefit from teaching which is very structured and multi-sensory, using as many of the child's senses as possible to support their understanding.

Some centres claim 'cures' for dyslexia and offer programmes which appear to be successful for some children, but not for others and there is much information on the internet. A widely held viewpoint is, however, that children with dyslexia can be helped in a number of ways so that they can achieve their potential, but their fundamental learning style will not be changed. This is an area of much debate.

Could anything else be causing this behaviour?

'The study of the cause(s) of dyslexia is fraught with difficulties. Diagnostic criteria are based on symptoms rather than causes, and the primary symptom - poor reading - is a learned skill that is not only very dependent upon the learning environment provided but might also reflect any of a large number of possible underlying causes'. (Nicolson and Fawcett 2008)

What might be other causes for symptoms suggesting dyslexia? One possible cause which has been highlighted is underlying and undetected visual difficulties which the child is not aware of but which are affecting reading progress.

Dyslexia-type symptoms can occur when there are eye-teaming, eye-

tracking and perceptual problems that can cause words, letters and numbers to appear to move or jump on a page. Parents may mistakenly assume that their child's problems are dyslexic in nature as they have 20/20 vision with or without corrective lenses and still have trouble reversing words, letters and numbers. A behavioural optometrist will be able to establish more clearly whether the underlying difficulties are related to how the visual system is functioning but there will be cases where the child has both dyslexia and visual difficulties.

Screening, assessment and intervention: a multi-disciplinary approach

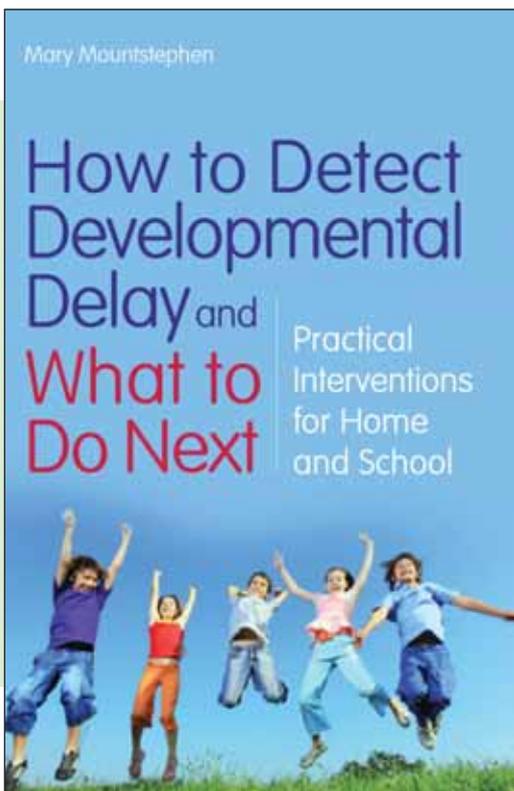
At Millfield Preparatory School, pupils whose learning is causing concern undergo an assessment programme which targets the underlying causes of the barriers to success. A user-friendly referral form was created in conjunction with the school staff where specific areas of concern can be highlighted. This then informs the type of assessments which will be undertaken. Specialist teaching staff have additional

training in areas such as:

- Visual processing screening
- Auditory processing assessment and intervention programmes
- Neuro-developmental delay screening, assessment and intervention programmes

By working together as a team, we feel we are more able to establish what is

preventing Gemma from achieving and how we can help. However, we do not underestimate the importance of calling on professionals such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, behavioural optometrists. Ultimately, it is our duty to make sure that Gemma is able to achieve to the best of her ability as a confident and independent learner.



References

Nicolson, R. Fawcett, A. (2008) *Dyslexia, Learning and the Brain*, MIT Press Cambridge Mass, London, England

This article has been adapted from Mary's book: *How to Detect Developmental Delay and What to do Next*, ISBN: 978-1-84905-022-7, available for £12.99, published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers

To order a copy of at the special reader offer price of £11.99 no P+P, visit www.jkp.com and enter the following promotional code – MOUPRE

Mary Mountstephen is director of The Learning Development Centre, Millfield School and Associate Member of The British Dyslexia Association

'Safe' – New social networking safety programme

Social enterprise DigitalME has launched 'Safe', a brand new, free national safety programme backed by Childnet International, Radiowaves and 'The i in Online'. It has been designed to support primary school-aged pupils in learning the essential skills to enjoy social networking, whilst remaining safe online.

With children sharing content online and joining social networks at an increasingly younger age, there is a greater need to ensure primary-aged pupils are equipped with the knowledge to understand potential risks and the skills to manage their digital footprint. DigitalME recognises that whilst the internet is an infinitely powerful tool, it also presents risks which young children need guidance to identify and address.

To fulfil this need, DigitalME consulted with industry experts and enlisted the help of three key organisations. Radiowaves, the award-winning social network for schools, is providing a free online platform; whilst Childnet International delivers expertise and resources on internet safety, and 'The i in Online' offers information and workshops on privacy and legal issues. Most importantly, practising teachers who understand the needs of such a programme have been influential in the programme's development.

Radiowaves director Mark Riches said: "We are proud to launch this exciting programme, and hope 'Safe' will support young children through providing the skills not only to communicate effectively, but safely. Independence is imperative to a child's quality of life and we must strive to ensure they are equipped to make well-informed, positive choices."

Lucinda Fell, Childnet International Policy and Communications Manager, says: "'Safe' embraces the positive opportunities afforded by the Internet, encouraging young people, when sharing on the web, to ask Who? What? Where? These are important messages for primary pupils to consider."

Kate Valentine, a teacher at Buckingham Primary School and 'Safe' adviser comments: "'Safe' has been created by teachers and the pupils have constantly been at the fore of its development, hence the programme is so simple to integrate and effective for both the teacher and children to use. It comprises step-by-step instructions, links to the curriculum, whole-class and carousel activities. Offering a self-assessment system, teachers can reward pupils for

completing the programme with certificates and badges, plus gaining accreditation for their school."

The programme is free to schools and optional, paid-for training, certificates, badges and other resources support the programme further. To find out more, visit www.digitalme.co.uk/safe

Supporters

DigitalME (www.digitalme.co.uk) is a social enterprise that aims to use new technology to provide innovative learning opportunities for all young people with a particular focus on engaging those disconnected from mainstream provision and opportunities.

Radiowaves.co.uk was launched in 2003 and is the leading safe social learning environment for young people, used in over 1500 schools in the UK and internationally, with 28,000 young reporters uploading their profiles, blogs, media and comments to moderated media stations. Radiowaves works with companies, industry organisations and government departments on projects which give young people a voice in a safe environment. Partners include The Football Foundation, the Imperial War Museum, Childnet, The Arts Award, The Ministry of Justice, The British Council, Drinkaware and the SSAT.

Childnet International (www.childnet.com) is a registered charity set up in 1995 with the mission to work in partnership with others around the world to "help make the internet a great and safe place for children." The vision of the organisation is to ensure that all those involved in developing, producing, controlling, using and regulating international telecommunications (current and future) recognise and implement policies and programmes which prioritise the rights of children so that their interests are both promoted and protected.

'**The i in Online**' aims to educate primary and secondary school children, as well as their parents and teachers, about using and providing their personal information online and the potential pitfalls of not managing privacy settings effectively. Legal experts highlight the regulatory and legal aspects of this topic, whilst also demonstrating technical issues and illustrating mechanisms to help protect personal data whilst using the internet.

www.speechlys.com/the_i_in_online

The Great Outdoors

How liberating children from military-style school rules can change their lives for ever, by Euan Hall, Chief Executive of the Land Trust

Here at the Land Trust we have long championed the belief that every child – from early years through primary and secondary – should be given the opportunity to embrace the great outdoors as a hub of activity and adventure. Children are becoming increasingly sensitised to being wrapped up in ‘cotton wool’ and more schools are implementing military-style rules, resulting in the extraordinary banning of handstands and running in the playground. It has never been more important for pupils of all ages to set aside their pens and paper and work outside with their senses and their imagination.

Early years

The growing perception that children are only safe indoors has prompted a culture of fear and litigation. Children who are only kept in very ‘secure’ places are not ones who can solve problems for themselves or take responsibility for themselves. It is a sad but well-known fact that many children are no longer allowed to play outside on the street or in nearby fields the way we did when we were

younger. We have a responsibility to recreate this environment for them, and even though it might be ‘engineered’, they are still rewarded with the same vital benefits.

Toddlers now spend more time indoors in front of the TV instead of making mud pies and rose petal perfume outside in the fresh air. Those who succumb to the indoor recreation lifestyle are more likely to become obese and to have a low concentration span in the classroom, associated with ADHD and higher stress levels. This is aside from other physical effects due to lack of fitness and low levels of vitamin D. During school time they spend most of their time confined to the classroom, when perhaps some of the curriculum can be taken outside into a real environment.

Learning about subjects such as wildlife, the food chain, ecosystems, habitats, physical geography comes alive and is much more pertinent when experienced first-hand. Children are more likely to remember what they have learnt in this manner than just simply being ‘told’ it in the classroom.

There are free outdoor play schemes up and down the country catering for all age groups and the Land Trust offers activities such as mini-beast hunts, bat walks, bushcraft events and den-building workshops, in addition to more general health-orientated play.

Children need to take calculated risks and teachers can’t and shouldn’t diminish all the risk. They need to be given responsibility and adults need to be there to support, but not interfere. Allowing them to make their own decisions and finding their own way will give them a huge feeling of accomplishment and achievement.

We believe that being anxious and preventing a child from taking risks is not encouraging them to persist at solving tasks and by removing the challenge we are taking away their resilience. This has a knock-on effect on the child’s self-esteem, as they don’t develop a belief in their own skills and abilities. Of course the risk of major injuries should always be protected against, but a few scratches and bruises are all part of the learning process and we are glad that a new report by the Health and Safety Executive and Play England has stated that it is important to allow children to take risks during play.

Primary School

Primary schools up and down the country are now adopting military-style rules and wrapping their pupils up in ‘cotton wool’. Perhaps all that’s needed is common sense and supervision, not more over-the-top health and safety rules. Children are now asked to wear goggles when using Blu-Tac, and the joys of playing a game of conkers and perfecting handstands in the playground have now largely gone .



Children need to take calculated risks...

A 2010 survey carried out by Play England and the British Toy and Hobby Association revealed that around 1500 parents of primary school children felt schools were too concerned with health and safety during play. The survey discovered that the average child got just one hour of play a day and around 1300 parents expressed the opinion that this was not enough.

ADHD and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) are becoming growing concerns for parents of school-age children and this can greatly affect the ability to learn and concentrate within the classroom. It is understood that ADHD may affect up to one in 20 school-age children and that it is at least four times more common in boys than girls. Children are usually diagnosed around the age of seven. Yet take these children away from the confinement of the classroom and the results can be astounding. In fact the benefits to both the mental and physical health of all children that derive from being active outdoors are massive.

The natural environment is a great educational resource that can provide some very valuable practical learning experiences. Our experience on Land Trust projects, including working with the Old Hall Centre in Doncaster, an educational unit which engages with children who find school especially difficult, shows us that children who struggle in the classroom often show enthusiasm and a great attitude and can be model pupils when outdoors. This behaviour often transfers back to the classroom. Projects like these illustrate the huge difference that well-managed open spaces can make.

Secondary school

When children progress into secondary school they meet more challenges and obstacles, for example social acceptance. They find problems harder to solve due to their lack of confidence and self-esteem. The great outdoors has an even bigger part to play in a young person's life at this age, whilst also helping to put a stop

to serious issues like anti-social behaviour.

Sir Liam Donaldson, Chief Medical Officer for England, published his *On the State of Public Health* report in March this year, in which he reports that among two-to-15-year-olds, 68% of boys and 76% of girls do not meet the minimum recommendation of an hour of moderate physical activity per day. He states that every secondary school child should undergo an annual fitness test to reduce the risk of illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes. This highlights the fact that getting active in the great outdoors is in fact a very serious business.

It's vital to give children this opportunity to connect with their environment. Many young people don't have that connection with their local woodland or field and we would like to change that for their own wellbeing and happiness. We understand that it is difficult for teachers to fit any more in and many are in fact very enthusiastic; but perhaps the opportunities don't exist locally to use the outdoors for learning. The Land Trust believes that outdoor spaces are an essential part of life and should be included in all towns for all communities and that these spaces should be utilised fully to deliver a wide range of benefits – but that's an issue for the planners and policy makers.

At the Land Trust our community rangers are working hard to eradicate anti-social behaviour within schools and help feed children back into mainstream education after they have been excluded or suspended. The rangers, through our Forest Schools, approach learning support units at local secondary schools whose students are known regularly to cause anti-social behaviour. The hands-on, practical conservation skills-based approach is designed to teach anger management, self control and team-building skills. Sessions are expertly presented to the students as a means of learning survival skills, but the rangers are able to engage skilfully with the youngsters and create an



Outdoor activity improves mental health

understanding of what the woodland can offer them, as well as the right way to treat it and how they can use its facilities.

The activities are hands-on, it's fun and it boosts the young people's self-esteem. Outdoor education like this increases physical activity and improves mental health, and because it involves small tasks it sets young people up to achieve. These sessions are orientated completely differently from school in that pupils are told that they start off with the complete trust of the rangers, but if they lose this trust it will be hard to regain.

Healthy, happy children

Playing outside in the fresh open air has endless positive results for children. Outdoor activities for children from young toddlers through to teenagers play a vital role in the development of healthy minds and bodies, and it sets the mark for the rest of their lives. There are many different ways in which we can incorporate the great outdoors into the everyday lives of children at school and at home. As teachers it is our responsibility to guide our children and young people and help them the best way we can. At the Land Trust we strongly believe that engaging with nature is a necessity, and that outdoor activities can be successfully operated alongside mainstream education.

For more information on outdoor activities and the Land Trust please visit www.thelandtrust.org.uk.

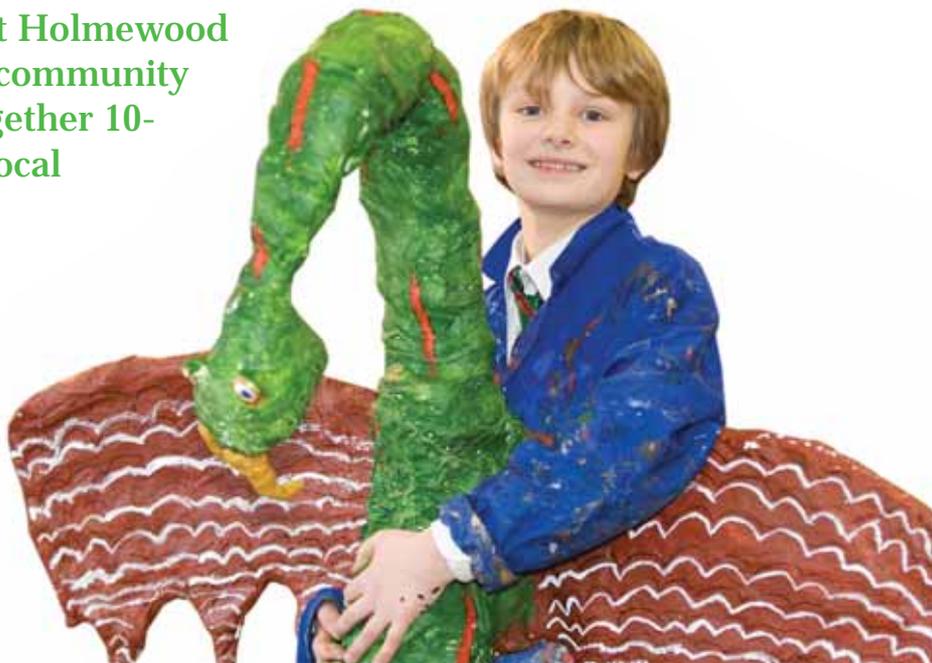
Myth-making in the art room

Tom Johnson, head of art at Holmewood House School, describes a community art project that brought together 10-year-olds from a range of local schools to create their own mythical creatures

Each year the art department at Holmewood House runs a project involving 10-year-old pupils from local primary schools. I invite each school to choose four pupils who really enjoy art to be involved in the project. The project has been very popular and pupils often build friendships with children from different backgrounds and communities within their area.

This year we expanded the size of the group from sixteen to twenty-four pupils, meaning that we had children from five local schools working alongside four pupils from Holmewood House.

The project starts at the beginning of September and finishes at the end of the spring term. Each Wednesday after lunch, the pupils burst into the art room with a high level of energy and enthusiasm, ready for their weekly two hours of art. This is a valuable



time for the children, as normally they would never have this much time dedicated to art in their timetables. It allows for the planning of much more ambitious projects than would usually be possible.

I like to get the pupils using messy, fun materials which might be avoided in a normal art lesson because of the time involved in preparation and clearing away. It is also useful for the pupils to get into the habit of preparing a space to work in by putting newspaper on tables and preparing materials, tools and equipment. At the end of the day, they take responsibility for clearing away and packing up. In all this they are working as a team.

Each week, at the end of the project and after clearing up, the group monitors for that week go to the kitchen and bring back drinks, fruit, crisps and Kit-Kats, which are appreciatively consumed. This is a time when most of the pupils unwind after the long practical activity.

If there is time I will often put on an animation or documentary for them to watch for the last 10 or 15 minutes. This year, because of the classical

theme, we have watched episodes of the 1980s animation *Ulysses 31*, which the children thoroughly enjoyed.

Mythical creatures

I chose the theme of 'Mythical Creatures' this year because I knew there would be so much usable material providing a truly rich source of inspiration that the children would be enthusiastic about investigating.

In the second week of the project, we took the group for a day trip to the British Museum where we spent time in the rooms dealing with Greece between 1050 and 520 BC, Athens and Lycia, Greek vases, Assyrian and Egyptian sculpture, the Balawat Gates. Of course, we couldn't go to the British Museum without going upstairs to see the mummies (past the magnificent Roman mosaics on the staircase) in the Egyptian death and after-life room.

I produced a work pack for pupils to use on the trip which had different pages dealing with specific rooms with tips on what to look for and spaces for sketching little details of teeth, claws, horns, scales, armour, eyes, fur and wings, and so on. Pupils were

"I like to get the pupils using messy materials..."



encouraged to gather as much visual information as they could in order to build a practical resource to use later in the project. Many of the details, patterns and symbols observed at the museum directly helped pupils to form their ideas into final designs, and were recognisable in the final creatures several months later.

Working on large-scale 3D work

We often use mod roc because pupils love using it, partly because it is messy but also because it's easy to use. Once pupils had developed and refined their final designs, they each drew out a 'wire drawing', simply a pen drawing on paper of what kind of framework or skeleton they imagined their creature would require beneath its mod roc surface. These drawings showed the different aspects of their designs, from the sides, front and back, and were very useful in helping pupils build a picture of what they were working towards.

The next stage involved working directly from these drawings and building the structure out of various different types of wire, modelling mesh and chicken wire. Originally, pupils were given a rough idea of maximum height (around 45 cm), but in most cases this grew to more like a metre. However, the mixture of shapes and sizes that began to emerge added a much greater element of individuality to each piece and pupils clearly relished the opportunity to create something that was, quite literally, monstrous.

The only problem from the art department's point of view was where to store these works-in-progress in a room with lots of other art going on during the week, but somehow we found spaces to squeeze them in here and there. Pupils learnt how to use wire-cutters and pliers safely, and were able to work very carefully, despite the slightly awkward gardening gloves which they had to wear.

With these frameworks of mesh and wire firmly constructed, pupils now had to consider if they wanted their



creatures to stand on their own two (or more) feet, if they would be supported on a wooden base, or if it was to be a winged beast which would be suspended from the ceiling or wall.

The mod roc stage then started, which meant weeks of white shoes and dusty trousers happily leaving the art room. When the final layer of mod roc had dried, a coat of PVA glue was applied, giving a good, shell-like surface to the whole structure, and sealing the porous plaster ready for painting.

Acrylic paints were used to complete the creatures, along with some metallic finishes for areas with metalwork or jewellery. Pupils were shown how to dry-brush over areas of their creatures to achieve a more weathered or ancient look.

The private view: celebrating the finished work

The grand finale of the project is the private view, showcasing the finished work. Invitations are sent to parents and guardians, siblings and grandparents, as well as each participating school's Head and art co-ordinator and the pupils' teachers. A buffet with drinks and treats is organised by the catering department, stools and tables are cleared from the art room, and a welcoming environment created so that everyone can come and enjoy the exhibition.

Pupils are awarded a special certificate by the Headmaster of Holmewood House and, at the end of the show, they take their creations home, along

with a folder containing all their drawings and preparatory work. This year, many bizarre and impressive creatures were seen being squeezed into the back seats of cars between the artists and their relatives.

With another community art project finished, and with the next one now being planned, I must say that the

"Hugely rewarding to organise"



regular, intense art sessions are one of the highlights of my week in the autumn and spring terms.

It is a hugely rewarding project to organise. Those children from the six different schools who arrived in the art room rather apprehensively at the start of September made up what would become a distinct, interactive and enthusiastic bunch who have been great fun to work with. They really enjoyed themselves, and it was nice to see them leaving with their mythical creatures in their arms.

Is there life beyond the classroom?

Last issue we focused on pupils working beyond their classroom. This term we bring you an article about what it is like for teachers to leave the security of the classroom...

There will not be many people associated with prep school mathematics who have not heard of Andrew Jeffrey and his passion for the teaching and learning of mathematics. Until four years ago he was deputy head of a prep school in Brighton, having taught in prep schools for 20 years.

Andrew now works as a maths consultant, speaker and coach, has written a number of books including *Mixed Maths Exercises*, *Be a Wizard With Numbers*, *Cool Calm and Calculators*, *100 Top Tips for Top Maths Teachers*, *Top Twenty Maths Displays*, *Using Magic in the Maths Classroom* and *Magic Maths for Kids*.

It is these last two titles that give the biggest clue to Andrew's other great passion in life – he is a professional magician! It was the idea to combine the teaching of maths with the

performing of magic that has led Andrew down a new and unexpected route: *The Magic of Maths Show*.

Prep School caught up with Andrew and asked him to talk about this unique show.

How did you get started mixing your job and your hobby?

It was entirely accidental. I knew a couple of number tricks and, as a mathematician, was rather intrigued by the interest and surprise they generated amongst intelligent people, so I decided to try out a particular trick with my Year 7 class one day. It seemed to get the message of the algebra across very well so I stuck with it – things developed from there.

What prompted you to give up teaching?

The official answer is 'it happened

gradually' but a more truthful answer is probably that I had a mid-life crisis. It was after five years as a deputy head that I was being asked to take more and more days out to give talks or deliver training. I felt this wasn't really fair to my school, so decided to give it a try full-time.

Wasn't that a bit scary?

Absolutely! But I had put a lot of thought and planning into the decision and my Christian faith proved very supportive, so we set out with a careful business plan and more than a few prayers and never looked back.

Really? Never?

OK, that's not quite true. I did have a few pangs at the end of the first term, when I was hoping to be invited to the school carol service, which was always magical, but this would probably not have been fair to my successor. Christmas in prep schools is a magical time, so yes, that's when I got a bit nostalgic. But since then I have been blessed with good fortune and plenty of interesting and varied work.

Tell us about the *Magic of Maths Show*. What are you trying to achieve?

I have to admit that I didn't ask myself that question as much as I should have done early on. Now I am much clearer about the purpose of the shows. They are motivational talks, punctuated by magic tricks that work by mathematical principles, or that have a message about confidence and learning.



Do you have a favourite trick from the show?

A few – it's hard to pick out one. Making a dodecahedron from two pieces of cardboard is my usual favourite closer, and younger children also enjoy meeting my puppet 'Maths Monkey' to learn about the importance of mathematical language when describing mathematical shapes.

I have honed it over the years so that I get rid of any tricks I don't like, or that don't fit with my message of 'you can do and enjoy more maths than you think.' I really enjoy using an electric saw to find 50% of a teenager – not much call for that one in prep schools, thankfully; I'm sure there would be letters of complaint!

What's the most unusual place you have been asked to go to?

Probably the stunningly beautiful Shetland Isles, almost certainly the furthest you can get from Brighton without a passport! In the past couple of years I have performed and lectured in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Italy, Germany and Holland, and next year I'm off to Brunei to perform and lecture for the South East Asia Maths Conference. I am excited and nervous at the same time.

What do you hope schools get from your visits?

I think that maths often has a bad press and suffers from some very negative stereotypes. At its worst, it is little more than a series of drills and exercises and endless worksheets and calculations and nobody ever stops to ask 'Why?' At its best, it is a rich and exciting language, a creative art and of course a science. Few subjects can claim so much, although music too is rightly described as art, science and language. One of the advantages that prep schools have is that many have a maths specialist, who naturally understands that maths is something that is to be explored rather than dictated. I dare to hope that in some small way my visits aim to help people rediscover the beauty and wonder of the subject.



How do you keep in touch with teachers?

I am first and foremost a teacher, and we rarely (if ever) have any training in marketing, so any advice is always welcome. I got a piece of advice about four years ago which was to produce a newsletter that took advantage of the enormous popularity of email. It's carried on every month since then – I now have nearly 4000 subscribers from both state and independent sectors.

You work in both sectors – what major differences have you noticed?

That's a tough one to generalize. I would say that generally teachers in independent schools are under less pressure from the piles of administration that our colleagues in state schools endure. The downside is that teachers in state schools enjoy access to a wider pool of support and training than their independent school colleagues. That's why I was so grateful as a teacher for organizations like *satips* and IAPS, who aim to fill that gap. Subject knowledge used to be a noticeable difference at primary level, but the gap is narrowing now with the introduction of the MAST (Maths Specialist Teacher) programme

recommended by the Williams Review. It says that every school should have a maths expert and, as long as funding isn't cut, this should continue.

What are your plans for the future?

I confess that I rarely won any prizes for my written lesson plans, as like many prep school teachers I was often too busy doing a myriad of other things to plan properly. So I thought it would be a good idea to write a book full of great maths lessons that could be prepared in a couple of minutes with the minimum of resources. I'm going to call it *Maths at the Drop of a Hat*. Also, if it fits with the ethos of the 'new look' *Prep School*, I would be happy to write more articles about maths teaching in our schools.

Andrew now works as an independent consultant, as well as carrying out training for BEAM, Numicon and Maths Makes Sense. He is best known to many prep school maths teachers as the organiser of the annual *satips* London Maths Conference, and serves on the Primary Committee of the Mathematics Association, as well as finding time to chair the Brighton and Hove Parents Forum.

Find out more at
www.andrewjeffrey.co.uk

The Joys of Gardening

Christina Tupper, science teacher at Barfield School, shares the view that the importance of encouraging children to participate in 'hands-on learning' is undeniable



The fruits of their labours...

A garden presents countless opportunities for children of all ages to do just that. Surely, all children should experience the process of preparing a window box, a raised bed or a patch of land to grow plants. Not only is it good physical activity, albeit potentially messy, but also there are aspects of the whole experience that transcend the ever-present learning objectives to which we teachers have to attend.

Great determination is required to push a hand-trowel into hard soil, especially when trying to dig to the very bottom of that frustratingly deep dandelion root. Physical strength and co-ordination are involved in simply

getting a fork fully into the ground (hopefully without going through someone's foot: another excellent health and safety learning opportunity). It is to be celebrated, especially if leaning back on the fork brings forth a clump of soil teeming with worms and various other invertebrates. Then there is the broader learning of awe and wonder: the simple acknowledgement of one of life's dirtier secrets, that manure means bigger and better plants. This can take some adjustment in young people's minds when they are so often steered away from such dirty concepts. Once the beds are prepared, there are negotiations to be done with the

children to decide on which seeds to sow. This planning needs input from the teachers as their choices can be ambitious; they may not appreciate the extent to which pumpkins will grow and cover everything, or that many plants neither flower nor produce fruit in line with school terms, so they won't see 'the fruits of their labours'.

What a joy it is to see the culmination of the season's growth, and to see little hands ripping up potato plants and digging furiously through the soil for soon-to-be-potato dishes; mashed, boiled, roast or in a salad with strips of the neighbouring chives. Tomatoes can be so immediate, if they can be

turning red as the children come back to school after the summer holidays, as they can pick them, and if brave enough, eat the juicy little ones there and then. As for strawberries, there are few plants with such a wow-factor. Provided that the slugs and birds have been kept at bay, nothing competes with a fresh, juicy, sweet strawberry. It is at this point however, that, with careful planning and considerable patience and will-power, the harvest can be taken even further. If the children can avoid the temptation of just chomping on a particularly juicy looking strawberry, they can cut off the green bits, wash them, and put them straight away into the freezer. There, the whole season's crop can be gathered, to be brought out on a dull autumn day, thawed, then blended into a smoothie, or if you are feeling indulgent, with a block of vanilla ice cream and milk, into a glorious milkshake.

A case study

The school garden at Barfield School started in September 2008, when an innocent grassy patch next to one of the buildings was bulldozed and cleared. In line with the school's ambitions to be 'sustainable-minded' (and having seen the prices of raised bed kits in the various catalogues), the idea to make our own out of old pallets was born. One of the parents at the school was only too happy to bring in some of many leftover pallets from his building business, and the Year 7 and 8 pupils were very keen to take a crowbar and hammer to them to release good raised bed planks. Our ever enthusiastic design technology and science teachers put their heads together with the Year 7 and 8 pupils and came up with a plan for our own home-grown raised beds, and parents kindly donated bricks to go around the beds in a rustic country cottage style. Such was the ambition of the project that the school called in the generosity of local garden nurseries, with their donations of old wooden crates to complement the home-made ones. A very enthusiastic set of

parents and children spent a fresh autumnal Saturday morning working on the beds and paths, and various classes chipped in here and there to help finish off the work in the Year 7 and 8 DT and science lessons.

As the site has taken shape, the difficulty has been to decide what not to do, rather than what to do. A central purpose of the garden is to ensure its use is tied in with secure teaching and learning objectives as required by the different subjects. The science syllabus has natural leanings to such a teaching resource as, of course, there is the 'green plants' section of the syllabus:

13+ Science Syllabus: Green Plants as organisms

- The effect of light, air, water and temperature on plant growth
- The role of the leaf in photosynthesis
- The role of chlorophyll in the leaf and stem in capturing this light energy; that nearly all food chains start with green plants
- The role of the root anchoring the plant, and how water and minerals are taken in through the root and transported through the stem to other parts of the plant; that mineral salts are nutrients which are needed for healthy growth

Reproduction

- The role of the flower in the life cycle of flowering plants

There are also many practical opportunities to link other scientific concepts. For example, for each crop grown, the pupils brought out their tinctures of iodine and witnessed the storage of starch in potatoes, parsnips and sweetcorn. The fortunate aspect of the garden also means a well-placed sundial can

demonstrate the seasonal variation of shadows caused by our movement around the sun.

13+ Science Syllabus: Humans as organisms: Nutrition

- About the need for a balanced diet containing carbohydrates, proteins, fats, minerals, vitamins, fibre and water, and about foods that are sources of these; that glucose and starch are examples of carbohydrates, vitamin C is an example of a vitamin, and calcium salts are an example of a mineral. The effects on humans of lack of vitamin C and calcium; the dangers of an excessive intake of animal fats; one good source of each food component; how to carry out the iodine test for starch

The Earth and beyond

- How the movement of the Earth causes the apparent daily and annual movement of the Sun and other stars; that the Earth is one of several planets which orbit the sun; the reasons for the changes causing night and day, seasons and eclipses of the sun and moon

Sold-out compost

Creativity in planning amongst the teaching staff has been heartily encouraged, and one idea quickly captured the imagination of the children – and the parents. Staff in the ICT department wanted to use spreadsheets for the older children to plan and see through an enterprise project; and with the garden producing its fair share of organic waste, a composting project was devised. The children had to source heavy-duty plastic bags and labels and work with the grounds staff to create compost bays and a good quality compost. The subsequent pile of 'ABC'



(Amazing Barfield Compost) was bagged up and all 40 bags sold out at the summer fair!

The evolution and development of the garden fortuitously coincided with the school's ambition to develop a cooking facility in the building next to the garden, and now staff are embracing opportunities. Our Year 8 class roasted the tomatoes from the garden (two carrier bags full of bright red and yellow, beefsteak, plum and cherry tomatoes) to make different sauces, including basil, chilli and parmesan, to go with pasta they cooked for lunch with the help of the Headmaster and his wife.

Lessons learnt?

There have been problems along the way. The ever-enthusiastic staff, tasked with developing the project, did not foresee quite how many bricks would be needed for the paths, and the labour needed to finish things off was underestimated, even with the presence of willing children available at any time. An army of hungry caterpillars ravaged the cabbages and sprouts, and the beetroot were sown too close together and were quickly overshadowed by the parsnips. Whatever the problem has been, it has been understood that, from the outset, this would be a learning experience for all, adults and children alike. Next year, for example, the brassicas will be under netting, and the root crops will

be spread out more.

The benefits? As well as the academic learning benefits, there is something simple and wholesome about a Year 2 class bustling around its raised bed to rip up its carrot harvest. Barfield School sets out its intentions in its Educational Mission Statement: 'The curriculum at Barfield will reflect education for a real modern world, with family and community values in a sustainable world at its very heart.' To see Year 7 and 8 harvest onions, peas, beans, potatoes, parsnips and leeks and prepare a broth over the campfire may not tick any academic boxes in itself, but in terms of personal and social development, it doesn't get much better.

It is exciting to see more and more interest being generated in schools about starting up their own gardens. The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), amongst other organisations, fully recognises the great impact gardening can make on a child's wellbeing, learning and development. It commissioned a report by independent researchers, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), which highlights how schools which actively use a garden develop 'resilient, ready to learn and responsible' children – 3R attributes that make up well-balanced, happier, healthy, rounded individuals. The RHS



believes these three Rs can be learnt when gardening is used as a teaching tool, not just an extracurricular activity. The report shows that gardening in schools encourages children to:

- Become stronger, more active learners capable of thinking independently and adapting their skills and knowledge to new challenges at school and in future
- Gain a more resilient, confident and responsible approach to life so they can achieve their goals and play a positive role in society
- Learn vital job skills such as presentation skills, communication and team work, and fuel their entrepreneurial spirit
- Embrace a healthier, more active lifestyle as an important tool for success at school and beyond
- Develop the ability to work and communicate with people from all ages and backgrounds

Gillian Pugh, chair of the National Children's Bureau and the Cambridge Primary Review, says: "Not only does gardening provide opportunities for increasing scientific knowledge and understanding, and improving literacy, numeracy and oracy, but this report shows that it also improves pupils' confidence, resilience and self-esteem."

<http://www.thegrowingschoolsgarden.org.uk/>

<http://www.thekidsgarden.co.uk/>

<http://apps.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/default.aspx>

<http://www.growingschools.org.uk/>



The new ISI Inspection – What schools need to know



Julie Booth looks at how technology can ease the pressure on inspection day

Ensuring that your school runs efficiently and effectively can be quite a challenge in these difficult economic times. New policies are being unveiled by the government which impact on the independent sector and there is more pressure than ever before to get students through the door. In the midst of all this commotion, schools are also having to adjust to a number of new rules that have been introduced as part of the ISI Inspection Framework.

The ISI is responsible for inspecting 1260 independent schools attended by more than 500,000 children across the UK. The aim of the changes to the inspection process is to ensure that the highest standard of education is being delivered and that every child is getting the support they need to achieve their full potential.

One of the key reforms that schools are adjusting to is that inspections will now take place every three years, rather than the previous six-year cycle. What is more, there are now standard and interim inspections, which will be alternated depending on the results of a school's previous inspection.

As part of the new Framework, the notice period given prior to an inspection has been reduced from 17 weeks to just five working days. This can create additional demands on even the most experienced school leader but there are a number of things you can do to help ensure your school is ready for the inspectors.

Be well informed

As educators, schools advise their students to read carefully the

questions on an exam paper and not jump to conclusions. This advice is equally relevant when applied to an inspection. It is wise not to make any assumptions about what documents need to be made available to inspectors as this will only create unnecessary stress on the day. The ISI produces a guidance booklet that contains a complete list of the documentation that schools need to



provide before, during and after an inspection. You should make sure you have received a copy of this as it will give you all the information you need.

Up-to-date information

The five-day notice period means there is now much less time available to collate the documentation inspectors will want to see. You should ensure any data you provide during the inspection is current, so good preparation is essential. Technology can help make this a much easier task. Many schools regularly record details such as their students' academic attainment or extracurricular achievements on a management information system (MIS). The advantage of this is that it allows them to produce at the touch of a button

current and detailed reports on how their students are progressing in school. The more data you store, the more you can provide as evidence of the success of your school's education strategies, which is key to a successful inspection. My advice is to be prepared and to record as much data as you can as a regular part of the day.

Make the most of your system

An MIS can provide powerful tools for tracking student progress but many systems also help schools with good record-keeping, so make sure you are getting full benefit from your investment. You may be able to set up standard alerts that will remind you to review school policies and update staff CRB records, for example. By keeping on top of these routine tasks throughout the school year, you will be one step ahead when notice of your inspection arrives. This will give you more time on the day to concentrate on the specific information requirements of the inspection team.

Manage overseas student visas

A number of changes are being introduced to the rules governing overseas student visas (Tier 4 of the points-based system). Ensure staff responsible for marketing and managing admissions for overseas students in your school are familiar with the new guidelines. These can be found on www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyintheuk. It would be wise to make sure that all the information you hold on visas for your overseas students is up to date and easily accessible. Some

systems provide automatic alert tools to help you keep on top of renewal dates for student visas so you do not have to remember.

Ensure you are covered

A growing number of schools are giving staff and parents online access to school and student data. This gives staff the option to work from home and keeps parents informed of how their child is doing in school – which is particularly important for parents living overseas. However, it is vital that you have a strong data protection policy in place that covers remote access to school and student information. Storing this document online will also ensure it is easily accessible to the whole school community.

Keep staff training up to date

The ISI offers a range of training and advice on preparing for a school



inspection. It is beneficial to plan ahead to make sure your staff understand what the information requirements are for their area of responsibility and build all their training needs into your usual development planning cycle.

Be ready for a call

Don't make the assumption that because your school achieved a good result during your last inspection you will sail through this time.

Requirements can change and if you want to ensure your school is ready for a call from the inspectors, you need to keep your school information up to date throughout the academic year.

Awaiting the arrival of the school inspectors can be a stressful time for all school staff. However, schools that are well prepared can embrace the inspection as a tool for driving business efficiency and delivering academic excellence. This is, after all, what every independent school works hard to achieve.

Julie Booth is head of independent schools at Capita Children's Services. Capita's SIMS management information system is used by 500 UK and international independent schools. www.sims-independent.co.uk

HMC junior day conference

A Head or The Head?

Being the Head of a preparatory or junior school that is 'attached' to a senior school has many advantages. The range of specialist facilities available to enrich the learning experiences of the younger children is a real asset, and the services available to support such Heads and senior teams are often significantly greater than those maintained by stand-alone preparatory schools. Smooth transfer of pupils, along with access to subject expertise at a high level, is a further benefit that cannot be disputed. Yet, there can also be tensions! The 'party line' expected may prove to be a stumbling block to the development of the junior school, or a distraction from the junior Head's vision and plans for

the future. And how can an appropriate focus and attention on the junior school be assured when staff and pupils are often significantly outnumbered by senior school staff and students? How can junior school Heads demonstrate their essential 'value' to the whole and secure appropriate resources, focus and attention? And how does the governance of the school demonstrate its commitment to and appreciation of the junior school Head?

These and a variety of associated topics sparked a lively debate amongst a group of junior school Heads who met together recently, Heads whose schools are attached to HMC senior schools across the country. There was clearly a wide

range of practice and experience, yet all found the debate informative, useful and illuminating. Arising from the discussions it was agreed to plan a day conference, focusing on a range of seminars and discussion groups, bringing together Heads of HMC junior schools from across the country. If you would like to be part of the debate, sharing the good practice and systems that successfully run in your school, giving dire warnings or just enjoying an opportunity for informal debate with colleagues, please do get in touch. We would be delighted if you could join us on Friday 6 May 2011. **Further details available from Denise Bennett** denise@hmc.org.uk

Discipline and name-dropping at the Hall School

by Greg Tesser

In 1954, that final vestige of wartime Britain – rationing – was finally put to bed when, to the delight of children everywhere, sweets became freely available for the first time since the Battle of Britain, with the lifting of the restrictions on sugar.

Needless to say, I was there, queuing outside our corner-shop on The Big Day. In many ways, it was then, at the tender age of eight-and-a-few-months, that my pure, unsullied childhood became history, as soon I was to enter the more austere and harsh world of the 1950s Prep School in the shape of that exclusive haven of learning for Hampstead's 'chattering classes', The Hall School.

To be admitted to its portals was by no means a given. Money spoke, of course, but you had to be interviewed by the original 'Mr Chips', the then-Headmaster Mr Wathen, before entry was rubber-stamped. It is said that the writer James Hilton based his famous character, immortalised on celluloid by Robert Donat, on Wathen, who in fact began his teaching career in 1902, the year after the death of Queen Victoria.

Thankfully, he seemed to take a shine to me because within a comparatively short time I was told I was in – much to my parents' obvious, but stiff upper-lipped, joy.

Wathen, known as Dub or GAW, WAS The Hall School. Appointed Headmaster in 1924, his undoubted charisma and dynamism transformed the school, making it one of the foremost preparatory schools in the country. But by the time of my grilling in his study, he was on the cusp of retirement after some 53 years as a schoolmaster. His replacement, in 1955, was a former Sedbergh housemaster, Raymond Cooper.

1955 was a pivotal year in terms of British popular culture. It was the year of 'Rock Around The Clock', James Dean in 'Rebel Without A Cause' and Teddy Boys. But it was still very much a period of complete deference and harsh discipline.

Having attended the very liberal pre-prep establishment in Highgate, Byron House, whose former pupils included John Betjeman and Elizabeth Taylor, the Hall proved to be somewhat of a dramatic sea-change for me.

The punishments were often severe, with the cane, slipper (usually an old plimsoll) and strap used to keep us in check, the latter being Mr Wathen's favourite weapon, which he often used on recalcitrant boys, standing to attention outside the classroom, having been banished there by the angry master in question.

The only lady teacher I encountered in the senior school was Miss Harbord. She was the archetypal schoolmarm, dressed in almost Edwardian fashion, with round horn-rimmed

spectacles and a severe bun at the back. She and I did not get on, and she was regularly threatening me with a whacking.

Miss Walker – fair but tough – seemed to dominate my existence in the juniors. I remember one incident in particular when, with my right arm in plaster of Paris – I had broken it playing 'Cowboys and Indians' with another boy – I pointed out to her that "I can't do what you asked me, Miss, because of my right arm". Without pausing for thought, she replied sarcastically, "No excuses, Tesser, you've got another arm, haven't you!" We were always addressed by our surnames in those days.

There were also the infamous 'Rozzy haircuts'. These acts of violence were perpetrated by the oldest of our masters, a Mr Rotherham, who when angry, would grow extremely red in the face, roar like a demented lion and grab your hair with his vice-like fingers. He then proceeded to shake your head back and forth and from side to side making you feel as if your brain was going to rattle. No wonder most boys preferred one of the legendary gym-shoe spankings meted out by a teacher of Australian origin named Mr Howard!

There were, of course, the more humane masters – men with a softer side. One chap in particular, Mr Bathurst, stood out like a beacon. All nicotine stained fingers and tweeds, he possessed a voice like velvet. And his readings from the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle brought the hansom cab world of Sherlock Holmes to life and indeed helped me along the way to becoming a lifelong devotee.

'Batty' Bathurst was a born actor, which brings me on neatly to the dominance of 'Luvvies' within the school's ranks.

I was first introduced to iconic actors at Byron House when aged about five, as in my class at that particular establishment were Dame Peggy Ashcroft's son Nicholas Hutchinson and Michael Hordern's daughter, Joanna. Nicholas joined me at The Hall where, amongst other things, he captained my house cricket team. I remember him choosing me for the first X1 because of my "brave fielding".

My "brave fielding" came to the fore in dramatic fashion when, standing in the slips, I received a cricket ball bang in the mouth. With blood pouring and shards of tooth raining on to the ground, I carried on, receiving only passing concern from the master in charge as the game continued. At the end of play I caught a bus home with some of the other boys!

Hutchinson's cricketing prowess received national headlines, when at the Schoolboys' Own Exhibition held at Olympia, he bowled out fifties batsman supreme Denis Compton in special nets erected for the occasion.

His mother was also a lover of the leather and willow and regularly turned out in the annual game involving the junior school and the mothers. In one such contest, she clean-bowled me, which at the time was an embarrassment, but is now something of which I am immensely proud – reflected glory I suppose.

My best friend at the school was Christopher Olgati. The son of a Swiss-Italian count and English mother, he lived in St John's Wood just a hop-skip-and-a-jump from the school, yet he was a boarder. Hopeless at games, even at an early age he displayed overt 'arty' tendencies. And in fact, from the age of about ten, we made a series of 8mm movies, including a real epic, a political thriller called '*Of You I Speak*'.

These days, 'Olgy' is a film-maker of international repute, having won a string of awards for his documentaries on Jimi Hendrix, Marilyn Monroe and Frank Sinatra.

Another particular pal of mine was Octavian von Hofmannsthal. Almost ethereal in demeanour, his young aristocratic face had the consumptive look of the doomed poet about it. He also had his run-ins with the frightening Mr Rotherham, and more than once was the victim of one of the 70-year-old's "haircuts".

"He hated me," Octavian told me recently, "because I'm half Austrian, and he was bayoneted by an Austrian in the First World War!"

Octavian's background deserves a tome all of its own. The son of writer Raimund, whose father Hugo was Richard Strauss's librettist, and Lady Elizabeth Paget, daughter of the 6th Marquess of Anglesey, who was a Maid of Honour at the 1937 Coronation of King George VI, he is now a successful fine art dealer.

His son Rodolphe married Lady Frances Armstrong-Jones, daughter of the Earl of Snowdon, the former husband of Princess Margaret, in 2006.

One boy, who was forever mysteriously 'disappearing' from The Hall, was Peter Asher. A child actor, he starred in his first film – '*The Planter's Wife*' – with Claudette Colbert and Jack Hawkins at the tender age of eight. I remember him going off to work with Richard Greene in the hit ITV series '*Robin Hood*'.

Two years older than sister Jane, in 1964 he topped the charts as one half of the 'Peter & Gordon' duo with the classic Lennon & McCartney song '*World Without Love*'. All told, the two managed nine hit singles, three of them million-sellers.

Another boy to 'disappear' to a film set was Jonathan Ashmore. The son of actress Rosalie Crutchley, he was chosen at the age of seven to star in a movie fantasy, directed by Carol Reed, called '*A Kid for Two Farthings*', which was nominated for a 'Golden Palm' at the 1955

Cannes Film Festival. The adult leads in the film were Diana Dors, David Kossoff and Celia Johnson.

Ashmore never acted again, and these days he is the Bernard Katz Professor of Biophysics at University College London.

Late on in the Fifties, Viscount Lascelles joined us. The son of the Earl of Harewood, the first cousin to the Queen, grandchild of King George V and nephew of King George VI, he was at the time seventh in line to the Throne, and his arrival at the school was announced with full solemnity at Reading Over by Headmaster Cooper.

A seemingly shy child, he has enjoyed considerable success in adult life as a film producer.

Others, whose lives seemed exotic and glamorous to us more 'ordinary kids', included Martin, the son of the world-renowned Czech-born composer and conductor Rafael Kubelik. A methodical chap, he carried a briefcase and wrote his essays with a brand-new top-of-the-range Parker fountain pen.

Then there was the young Spender, son of poet Sir Stephen, whose poem *The Truly Great* was quoted by USA President Reagan at the ceremony commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Normandy Invasion (D-Day) in 1984.

I could go on, but I won't, with names that will forever remain in my memory bank from those black-and-white days of discipline, deprivation and indeed pain; days that are now as much a part of history as Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays*.

Despite sometimes ending your day with a sore backside, or thanks to Mr Rotherham, missing a few tufts of hair, these were special days, aspects of which I look back upon with extreme fondness.

The school's motto is *Hinc in Altiora*, loosely translated as 'From Here to Higher Things'. As far as I am concerned, The Hall gave me a grounding that stood me in good stead for all that life had to throw at me in the future.

Writer and broadcaster, the late Edward Blishen, was a teacher at the Hall School during the late 40s and early 50s.

He later turned his experiences into a highly-praised novel, '*Uncommon Entrance*'. The Hall became The Vale, and all the masters he encountered (many of whom were at the school during my time) feature in the novel (with different names, of course). *The Times* newspaper hailed the novel as "A minor masterpiece - almost as funny as Evelyn Waugh's '*Decline and Fall*' and twice as realistic".

The book was first published in 1974, and is still available for purchase through 'Amazon'.

Can you reflect on your happy memories of prep school education? Do get in touch.



A celebration of the joy of singing

The annual *satips* Songfest was held this year at Leighton Park School in Reading, and followed by a second day at Oakham School, Rutland on 18th and 19th October. These one-day singing workshops, which bring together children from primary and prep schools around the country, are organised each year by Tim Frost of Colet Court School in London, on behalf of *satips*. Details of forthcoming events are advertised in the termly *satips* Broadsheet, so do look out for next year's Songfest if you have not been before.

The day was led by two renowned choral leaders: Lin Marsh, a composer, arranger and inspirational choir director, and Douglas Coombes, a composer who also has vast experience as a workshop leader. They each taught the children repertoire from scratch, all by rote, and captured their imagination with different warm-ups and movement to accompany the songs they were learning.

Lin Marsh taught three songs during the day, including two of her own compositions which can be found in her book, *Songscape - Earth, Sea and Sky*. In order to set the atmosphere for her first song - which was about the rainforest - she got the children to create a vocal soundscape including a swarm of bees, birds singing, monkeys and a few squawking parrots! This effective vocal exercise became the introduction to the song, with the piano beginning to play as the different rainforest sounds faded out. Lin's second song also started with a vocal sound effect to portray the title of the song, *The Wind*. This was combined with swaying movements and provided the perfect setting for this powerful song to arise from.

A particularly effective tool Lin used for engaging the children and capturing their attention was to introduce three 'focus points' - three different places in the room for the children to look at and focus all their energy on. This provided an excellent basis for the presentation of the material she taught. Lin's ideas about performance are firmly rooted in musical theatre and she teaches children to perform with a great emphasis on movement, expression and making the audience believe in the performance. The children were constantly invited to share their ideas for appropriate movements to go with a song and were challenged to think about changing from one movement to another, so that everything they did looked convincing and had direction.

The morning session saw Douglas Coombes keeping us all on our toes as he raced through a number of songs. We began with a welcome song from Africa, involving a clapping routine with a partner. This got faster and faster and served as an effective warm-up and ice-breaker as the children tried to keep up. He followed with the well-known song *Kum-bayah*, to which he added a choreographed set of actions, before moving on to one of his own compositions: a setting of the verse, *When I was walking up the stair*. (When I was walking up the stair / I met a man who wasn't there / He wasn't there again today / Oh how I wish he'd go away)

After lunch and another rousing warm-up, Douglas engaged us all in a group composition activity. The children were given some text and set the task of creating their own melody. This was done by inviting volunteers



to improvise one line of melody each. The final result was a song made up of a series of ideas contributed from a number of different children from the various schools who attended the day. To finish his part of the day, Douglas taught us two short Christmas songs: *The Joy Bells Ringing* and *I've got Christmas in my Heart*. Lin's own arrangement of *Let it Snow* was the perfect continuation of the Christmas theme and her songs from the morning were also re-visited and rehearsed in preparation for the concert at the end of the day.

This informal concert was a real testament to the nature of the day. Performing to ourselves and for ourselves, the occasion was a rare celebration of the joy of singing. The songs we had learnt during the day were interspersed with individual items performed by some of the schools present, creating a lovely platform for the sharing of each other's music-making. There was no doubt that all the children had enjoyed the day enormously. It was an exceptional and valuable opportunity to spend an entire day singing, allowing the children to become immersed in music-making purely for pleasure.

Kate Rattenbury
Director of Music,
Norland Place School, London

Sing up! We love singing

Music co-ordinator Chao Teng explains Grimsdell's journey to the Sing Up Silver Award

Grimsdell, Mill Hill, is a coeducational pre-preparatory school in the green belt of North West London. The school aims to provide a happy, secure and rich learning environment for children aged three to seven. Music is an integral part of our school life. We have a huge amount of music going on at the school every day, and all the children, staff and parents love singing. Because of this, in September 2009, we pledged to the Sing Up Award Programme. In July 2010, after all the children, staff and parents had worked together, we were so delighted to have gained the Silver Award.

The whole school singing together

In September 2009, the music teacher decided to introduce the exciting Sing Up Award Programme in the school. The Head Teacher was very impressed with the programme and we decided to apply for the Silver Award. During the first staff meeting of the autumn term, the music teacher introduced the Sing Up Awards to all the staff and showed them how to use the Song Bank resource in the classroom. In the following weekly staff meetings, the music teacher updated the progress of the journey step by step. A Sing Up Award display board in the school is kept up to date with information for the children and parents.

Singing starts the school day. Whole school assembly takes place four times a week. Every week, we choose a favourite song from the Sing Up Song Bank; the Head Teacher, class teachers and children sing a song together at the beginning of each assembly. All the songs are fun with humorous lyrics, actions and catchy melodies. Tuesday morning is a special 'singing



assembly'. The music teacher leads with a class teacher assisting the assembly. The assemblies give a bright start to the school day, ensuring everyone is happy and in a positive mood to start work.

Children sing from their heart

At Grimsdell, every child can sing. You do not have to have a super pitch and voice. The most important thing is that you enjoy singing.

Every class has a music lesson twice a week, as well as one year-group singing session, each lesson lasting 40 minutes. They learn several songs, including some about festivals, events, seasons and weather from the Sing Up Song Bank. All the songs are catchy tunes and fun. The children love singing them in the classroom, during assembly and in the playground. Furthermore, every child has been the singing leader on at least five occasions during a term. This has increased children's singing skills and self-confidence. In addition, Years 1

and 2 have been learning to play recorders and keyboards. They have performed in the school assemblies to the staff and parents.

Since we started Sing Up, we have had three different choirs. It has given all of the children the opportunity to join in the choir and experience singing more difficult repertoires (singing rounds/parts). The three choirs have performed successfully at the different concerts.

Even though our children are very young, a professional production takes place for each year-group at the end of each term. Through the year, Year 1 and Year 2 perform in our Christmas concert as well as having Harvest Festival and individual productions in the summer term. Reception production performs at the end of the spring term and nursery concert in the summer term. Since we started Sing Up, National Sing Up Day has become an annual event in the spring term. These performances are the

celebrations of the children's singing. The children automatically show their confidence when they sing, and always perform with a smile, which is fantastic to see.

All staff get involved in singing

We are very lucky as we have a full-time music specialist who works with all the classes. The children have been taught in music sessions using the methods of Kodaly and Dalcroze. Singing materials are taken mainly from the Sing Up Song Bank but we do use other resources as well. The songs link well to the broad curriculum at Grimsdell.

The fun songs are introduced in the music lessons and then taken back to the classroom. All the songs are added to the Sing Up website, our Award Champion's favourite song list. Class teachers can find the songs on the website easily and use the interactive whiteboard to play them in the classroom. This is great; no piano skills are required, no-one has to be a superb singer and everyone is learning. The staff try singing the register regularly as well as singing in literacy, numeracy, science and foreign language lessons with children, *eg. Put your coat on, Alice the camel, A sailor*

went to sea, sea, sea, Make that sound, Who are we. At the end of the afternoon, children sing a song to finish the school day, *eg. Goodbye.* Gradually, the staff build their singing confidence as they become more familiar with the resources available.



Parents get on board

The most exciting thing is that our parents are passionate about Sing Up. They have been involved in lots of singing activity in the school and at home. At each concert and production the children choose their favourite song to be the audience's song at the end of the performance. At home or on the way to school, the children have taught songs to their parents or grandparents. When the parents come to see the performance, they participate and sing along.

Because the parents are so enthusiastic, we have had two special

'parents singing assemblies'. Both assemblies were very successful. The children sang playground songs and played games in circles and pairs while the parents were singing. The parents also sang in two parts with the children. The parents had great fun at these assemblies.

Several parents wrote thank you letters to the school to say how pleased they are that the school had joined the Sing Up programme. They have had lots of fun-time with their children and the whole family singing together. They were also delighted to see the Head Teacher and the staff singing with the children.

With support from Sing Up, help from the Song Bank and using cross-curricular links, we are confident and excited at starting our next journey in November 2010 - the Gold Award. We will continue our super singing activities in the school and take part in some exciting outside school singing performances: Barnet Infant Music Festivals; Barbican Concert; Young Voices O2 concert; and also add other singing challenge projects *eg Pupil, Class Teacher & Parent Sing Up Champions.* We are certainly very proud of 'Grimsdell's Silver Singing School', because we love singing!



"Celebrations of the children's singing"

"Powerful, Performable and Publishable"

Stephen Davies teaches English and other things at Kitebrook House. Here he shares his passion for poetry and makes the case for living and breathing real poetry, not just analysing it in an exam!

As the organiser (but not the judge) of the annual *satips* poetry competition I get to sample more than 750 poems from children aged 7-13. It is rarely boring. In 2010 our

judge was Professor David Morley of Warwick University, who in his report was enthusiastic in his praise of the winning poems ("They are powerful, performable and

publishable") and he congratulated the outstanding teachers for enabling such writing to flourish. Here is one of the winning poems, which speaks for itself, I think:

Twilight White Owl

First Prize, Years 5 and 6 Category

James Coto, Lanesborough School

*To see the twilight white owl wavering over the dew-mist
Startles my heart, a mouse in its house,
Remembering a dim past
When we were only the weight of shrews, maybe, and everything ate us
In a steaming, echoing jungle, of night-flying alligators
And the dawn-chorus shook the swamps, like a booming orchestra
Where Brontosaurus were merely the flutes and land-whales beat on the drum of the ear
It has all sunk into the fern-fringed forest pool of the owl's eye,
But it reaches over the farm like a claw in the owl's haunting cry.
The owl sways, weighing the silent world, his huge gaze dry and light
Flying with a sense of immortality and never coming down from the dew-mist sky.
"Hoot! Hoot", dawn is approaching,
The twilight owl makes his way down to the ground into a fresh beech tree,
Spins his head round, checking his surroundings and going to sleep
Waiting for the next twilight to fall.*

Wow! So, children are the most natural of poets: they have the ability to observe, to see things as if for the first time, to invent new language, to play with sounds and rhythms. (There are plenty of older poets who have had to re-teach themselves these skills.)

But it can also be argued (and perhaps

this was truer in the past) that if we, as pressurised teachers preparing for such events as Common Entrance, are not careful, we will create children who only ever read poems in examinations. Poems written by strange beings called 'poets' become like algebra – a problem to be solved,

a code you have to crack. The same children who write so freely can, by the time they get to senior school, say that they 'don't like poetry'.

This, of course, is very unfair. Imagine someone saying they didn't like music – they just like different sorts. So poetry can suffer, and has suffered,

from a bad press. Rather like the recent RSC appeal to teachers of Shakespeare ('Do it on your feet'; 'See it live'; 'Start it earlier') there's a case for a review. I think getting your children reading poetry out loud (on their feet), meeting writers and poets (see it live) and doing it regularly and from an early age has immeasurable benefits – of course it does. But – and here's where the *satips* poetry competition comes in – best of all is to get the children writing for themselves.

Good teachers and good poets know that there is always a connection between what you write and what you read. So I would argue that in many ways the best method of preparing your candidates for a comprehension that might involve a poem is to get them to write their own poetry. And, if motivation and support are needed, then the *satips* competition, along with other similar operations, offers just that. Sometimes (always?) you need a good reason to write or finish a poem – certainly a good old-fashioned deadline is fantastically useful. There are prizes, certificates and even cups, but it is the writing, and the sending out of that writing, that really counts.

The *satips* Poetry Competition is judged by a contemporary poet – this year the award-winning and youthful Luke Kennard. Here are some of the

thoughts that help me when teaching and encouraging the writing of good, contemporary poetry.

- Read poetry, old and new, on a regular basis. For yourself and for, and with, your pupils. Not every poem has to be analysed. Start your writing sessions by reading a poem that works. Use this as a template, or a springboard.
- Write yourself – if you are asking the children to do something, then you need to do it too. Show them your own process, your own struggles and (in my case) your own failures. This gives them confidence!
- Don't mention the rhyme. A writer struggling to rhyme often ruins what good ideas they have. Encourage half-rhymes or no rhymes. Rhyming that comes naturally is great.
- Write with an object or a photograph or a picture in front of you. Scatter these round the class liberally and ask them to describe what they can see. Poetry is above all a visual art – the reader should be able to 'see' what happens in the poem.
- Publish anthologies. Computers make this easier than it was. For a writer to see their poem 'published' in this way is incredibly affirming. Scholastic's 'We Are Writers' programme is worth exploring.



- Be patient – use the drafting process. All good poems go through at least three drafts. Issue notebooks or 'scribble books' that can hold works in progress. A few weeks or months later these jottings can be revisited and turned into a final poem.
- Book a poet. The Poetry Society will help you find one. Many poets will happily run a workshop, answer questions and read from their work. Expect to pay a fee, but you'll find it more than pays off.

Enter the *satips* Poetry Competition. Full details and entry forms are available on the *satips* website or from sdavies@kitebrookhouse.com. **Deadline is 25 March 2011.**

Useful websites

<http://www.satips.com>

<http://writers.scholastic.co.uk>

<http://www.arvonfoundation.org>
(outstanding writing courses for teachers)

<http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk>
(for visits to schools and Foyles competition)

<http://www.childrenspoetrybookshelf.co.uk> (ideas and more competitions)



"Children are the most natural of poets..."

A window on the outdoors

Patrick Papougnot sets up the outdoor education page. Please get in touch with ideas, book reviews and resource suggestions for this new, regular section

A major study recently reported in *Wikipedia* indicated an overall ongoing positive effect of adventure education programmes on outcomes such as self-concept, leadership, and communication skills. Well, this is exactly the way to secure the promotion of activities outside the classroom in the framework of a busy prep school. Alas, it has been suggested also that outdoor education is increasingly an entertainment park consumption experience. So, what do we need to consider first when we examine the opposition between the recreational and the educational assumptions?

Participation in group games

Outdoor education is an experience of learning in, for or about the outdoors and a number of studies have shown that the most effective way of learning is through participation. Therefore, the instructors have to develop their own way to create opportunities for children to participate in their learning. This can be done on a shoe-string budget, literally in the courtyard just outside the classroom with the organisation of lateral thinking team-building games, or in a more elaborate and costly journey to a wild and remote location.

Interpretation

Outdoor education, however, refers to a range of organised activities which take place in a variety of outdoor environments. Interpretations vary according to culture, philosophy and local conditions. Whereas adventure education would focus on the adventure side and environmental education would focus on environmental, the hallmark of outdoor education is its focus on the 'outdoor' side of this education. So, when a class is active in an area familiar to them outside the classroom or when they take part in an adventure 'where man is but a visitor', the overall effect will be the same: to develop their outdoor spaces into learning environments within safe conditions and according to a well crafted plan allowing creative and spontaneous engagement.

Risk aversion is the real threat

Reluctance to carry out outdoor education tasks necessarily demanding in terms of time, creativity, energy and most of all risk, is widespread in prep schools. Teachers, parents and management can be real obstacles and there is no future for an outdoor education programme in a school where risk aversion has not been harnessed appropriately. The solution here requires not only to put the children at the centre of learning but also to ensure that individual children's learning and developmental needs are taken into account and met effectively. The UK Early Years Framework Stage stipulates that outdoor learning is more effective when adults focus on what children need to be able to do rather than what children need to have. The extension 'bottom up' of this principle throughout the whole school alleviates most of the barriers created by the natural and structural aversion to risk. Part of the risk assessment in such an effective outdoor programme demands, first, the listing of competences required by the children in each year group and paradoxically puts them comfortably 'out of their comfort zone'. It is at this precise spot that pupils experience 'the flow' (a timeless, enjoyable but challenging experience), well described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. The vitality gained by all participants is phenomenal. The risks, limited to the rules and regulations of the institution, will be well within the DfES practical guidelines for outdoor activities.

Conclusion

To create an outdoor learning environment does not need to cost a great deal nor does it require extreme experience. It is a journey connecting participants (the learner and the teacher) in a deeply human and ancestral 'dance of life'. It is about self, the others and the natural world. It is a very subtle process that teaches how to overcome adversity, enhances personal and social development and develops a deeper relationship with nature.

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Photographer of the Year 2011



Now is your chance to prepare your entries for the 2011 Prep School Photographer of the Year competition. We had a great response to last year's competition, with over 100 entries from dozens of schools. The first prize was won by Chelsea Kuoh from Ashdell Prep School in Sheffield, pictured here showing off her new Sony Digital SLR camera to her classmates.

Entries must be received by May 31st, 2011 and the winning photographs

will be published in the September 2011 issue of *Prep School* magazine. Digital cameras will be presented to the first three prize-winners.

The task: Take a photograph in colour, or black and white, illustrating life in a prep school. It could be on the sports field, in the classroom, at societies or clubs, showing pupils at work or play. It must be sharp, it must be well composed and, above all, it must show the fun of life in a modern prep school.

The rules: Only pupils at independent prep and junior schools may enter; no more than two photographs per entrant; files should be 300dpi/ppi. Photographs are only accepted in an electronic format either by posting a CDROM to Michèle Kitto, c/o John Catt Educational, 12 Deben Mill, Business Centre, Melton, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 1BL or by email to: editor@prepschoolmag.co.uk. Label the entries clearly with the names of the entrants and your school details.

ENTRY FORM

Prep School Photographer of the Year Competition 2011

Name of Entrant(s) _____

Name of School _____

Name of Confirming Teacher _____

As far as I am aware this photograph is the sole work of the above pupil.

Send entries to Prep School Photographer of the Year 2011, John Catt Educational Ltd, 12 Deben Mill Business Centre, Old Maltings Approach, Melton, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1BL.

Or email to editor@prepschoolmag.co.uk

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Making it matter

Some of the West End's best musical theatre performers are visiting schools and inspiring children to engage in the performing arts. Craig Christie explains...

Everybody accepts that the performing arts are of fundamental importance to every child's development. The instinct to sing, to dance, to create roles and play-act can be seen in infants from the moment their independent thoughts and actions become evident. Sadly what we see happen as a child goes through the process of their formal education is that the capacity to enjoy and explore the world through these inherent avenues of expression is diminished. It is vital that we keep these avenues open.

Integrating performing arts into all areas of learning creates an access to success for pupils and presenting quality examples of singing, dancing and acting within the school context is a straightforward way to achieve this.

When I first began to develop programmes that integrated performing arts with other curriculum areas I did so from the perspective of a writer and director who had ten years' practical teaching experience in the classroom. I was well aware of how the burden of delivering the ever-increasing demands of new policies and directives makes the prospect of some tasks daunting. Delivering an arts programme to children in the classroom without specialist training presents a major challenge and yet we find that teachers are expected to be able to satisfy the demands of the creative curriculum in many cases with minimal experience and little confidence. I wanted to develop a programme that was straightforward and practical in supporting classroom teachers in delivering quality arts education and to integrate this arts experience into the broader curriculum. By far the most successful programme which achieves this has been the literacy programme which has been



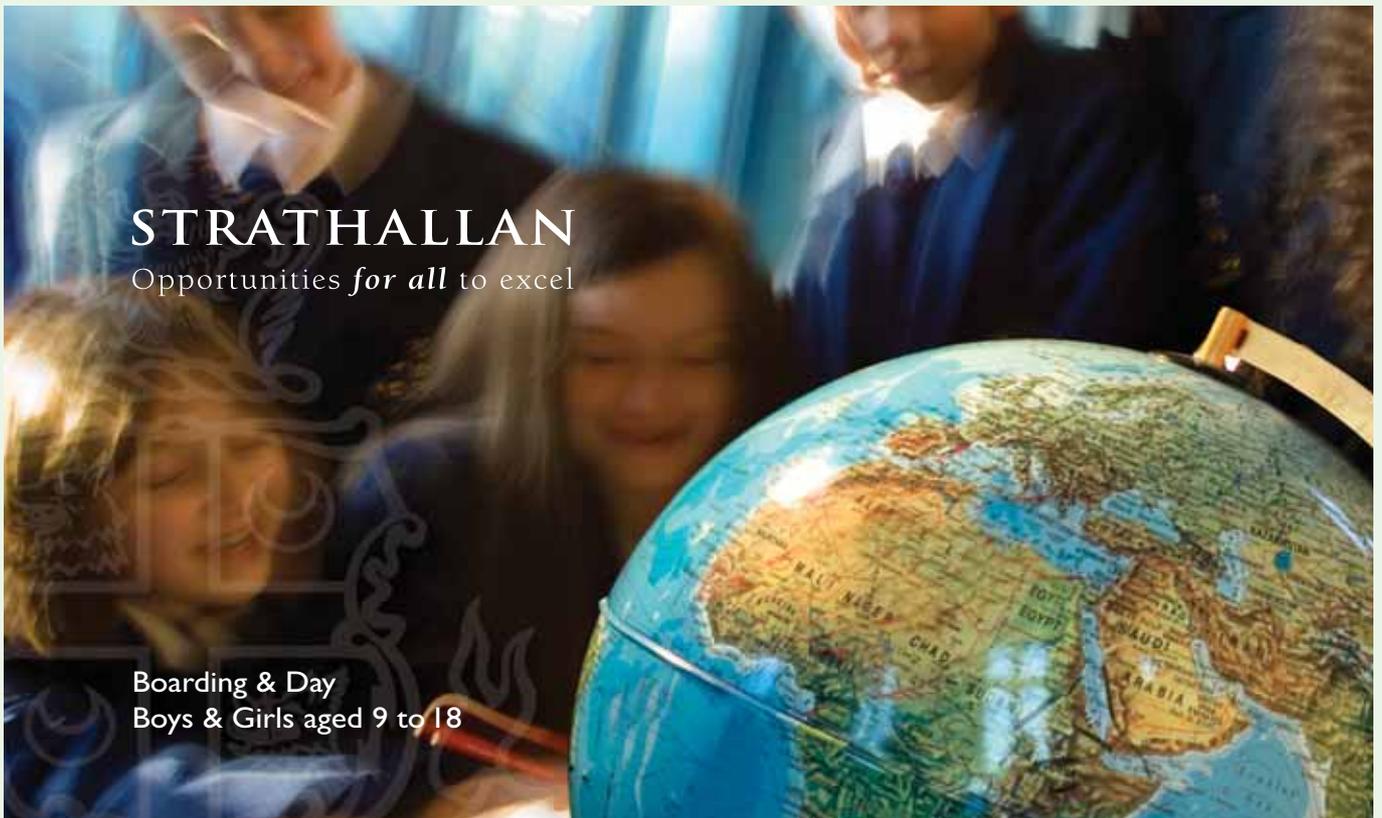
touring Australia since 1991 and is now available to schools throughout the UK through 'West End in Schools'.

Every year a new stage musical is created specifically for primary school pupils. These musicals are based upon a general personal development theme and integrate books and reading into the narrative. The shows do not re-enact the books: rather we introduce new characters within our stories who interact with ideas and characters within the books to propel the narrative and demonstrate how accessing literature has immediate and practical outcomes. Our musicals also increase pupils' awareness of the books and create a context for reading that goes beyond having a book as recommended (or indeed compulsory) reading. Our aim is to make accessing literature a shared experience and one that is relevant and enjoyable.

In crafting these shows every year I bring as much integrity and quality to the material as if I were writing a show aimed at West End adult audiences. I maintain that writers creating work for

children (as well as producers and performers) have a responsibility to create work of the highest standard as for many pupils this will be their first and in some instances perhaps only experience of live performance. It is vital for our children to have access to great quality scripts and music, singing, dancing and acting in order to remain engaged with performing arts throughout their primary school education and beyond.

In establishing *West End in Schools* we have assembled a team of highly talented performers who are employed not only because of their outstanding skills and performance credits but also because they are passionate about delivering quality performances within the classroom context. It is exciting to be able to deliver great examples of performing arts in the school environment. Likewise it is exciting that pupils are given the opportunity to see how effective drama and music can be in exploring and delivering practical outcomes when presented with learning challenges; whether those challenges be exploring themes such as

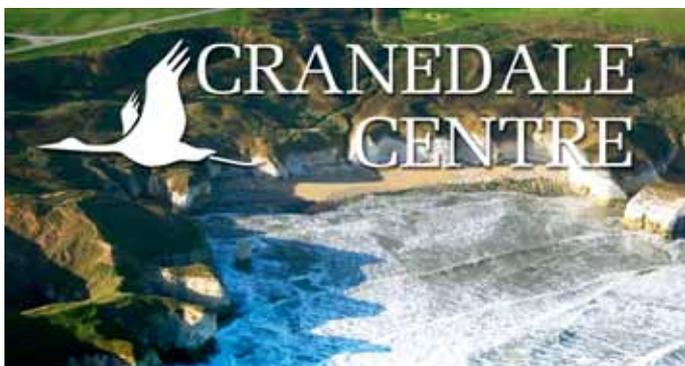


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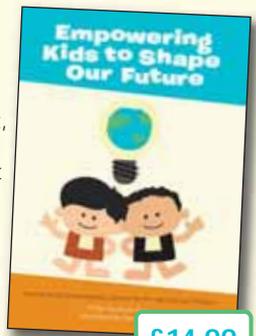
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fear, friendship, the environment, self-esteem or simply being encouraged to read.

Presenting live performance is a straightforward means of delivering curriculum objectives. The inherent understanding of this is illustrated by the abundance of companies that create productions for the primary school market. However such an experience should be more than 'art for art's sake' – an activity that is flashed before students without appropriate consideration of its quality and content and is simply a means of ticking an 'arts experience box'. This is why we strive for excellence in content and performance as well as creating practical classroom notes for teachers which provide activities to precede, follow and enrich the theatrical experience.

West End in Schools productions are created around the core concepts of access and excellence. Our shows are by design very simple in their presentation so that the focus is on the material and the skill by which it is being delivered. We present a unique staging approach, performing in an aisle in the centre of the audience (which keeps the entire audience close to the action) - a model of performance teachers can easily implement in the classroom. It shows with clarity and inclusiveness that all you need to create a live performance is yourself and an idea. It empowers pupils to get up and explore performing arts without needing to hide behind a costume or be distracted by props.

The Roberts Review entitled 'Nurturing Creativity in Young People'

(2006) states that 'Creativity should be central to every child's early learning experience.' Keeping alive that fundamental ability to express oneself and make sense of the world through play, through music, drama and dance must never be considered as extraneous to a child's education. In creating opportunities to see these abilities at work by dedicated and skilled professionals, 'West End in Schools' provides a unique resource to teachers throughout the UK. It also provides a practical example of how these skills can be integrated into the wider curriculum by turning books and reading into a 'live' experience. As we all know, we can forget things we are told but we remember our experiences forever.

Craig Christie

www.WestEndinSchools.org.uk

Princess Anne drops in to Orwell Park School – a day to remember

The pupils of Orwell Park School near Ipswich, Suffolk, had a great thrill when Princess Anne landed her helicopter in their grounds when on an engagement to open some new houses for local villagers of Nacton. After opening the houses she addressed a meeting of the people behind the scheme and the villagers in the school's main hall, The Orangery.

The Princess was greeted at the school door by Headmaster Rowland Constantine, head girl Phoebe Swiderska and head boy Rory Farquharson, talking for a few minutes about the benefits of the school's flexi-boarding.

After lunch the Princess Royal stopped on her way to her helicopter to chat to the assembled pupils, waiting to wave her off. She then left in her helicopter in front of the school building, to great excitement from the children.



News

Sue Martin from Talbot House wins National Teaching award

Talbot House Year 6 teacher and Deputy Head Mrs Susan Martin has been chosen as the overall winner from amongst stiff competition in the South West region for "Teacher of the Year in a Primary School". Her wonderful achievement was celebrated at the National Teaching Awards conference and ceremony at the end of October.

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Prep school courses and events

satips courses and events

19 Jan	Inspection: What teachers should know What classroom teachers will need to do for an inspection. This will be run by Richard Ellis (educational consultant: 2beffective). He will explain marking requirements <i>etc.</i>	Washington Mayfair Hotel, London
3 Feb	satips Challenge. For more details, email: competition@satips.com	
23 Feb	Science - KS2 satips conference The conference will include activities for KS2 science teachers who are non-specialists. The day will be run by Peter Johnson.	Washington Mayfair Hotel, London
17 March	Maths - annual satips conference Organised by Andrew Jeffery. Focusing on ways to provide high-quality mathematics activities for your most able pupils. Cost: £100 per person.	Feltonfleet School Cobham, Surrey
3 May	Sustainable Development - Making Your School Sustainable The conference will include updates on the latest thinking and developments in Sustainable Development, discussing issues such as educating for a sustainable mind and creating the learning landscape for sustainability. Aimed at Senior Management Teams, staff responsible for Sustainable Development.	Barfield School
14 May	Private view of satips Art Exhibition	Hordle Walhampton
16 May	Deadline for National Schools Handwriting Competition	

Art

19 Jan	Leading an art department	Twyford School, Winchester
22 Jan	Co-ordinating art in the early years	Abingdon Prep, Oxford
9 Feb	Art history An art teacher's guide to art history and how it can be incorporated into project work	Summer Fields School, Oxford
23 Feb	Working in wire Techniques for wire work in the classroom: practical extensions.	Abingdon Prep, Oxford
15 March	Using sketchbooks Developing this powerful tool through a range of different techniques, materials.	Prior Park Preparatory School, Wiltshire
6 April	Printmaking Adventures in monoprints, collographs, linoprints, drypoint prints and experimental work.	Abingdon Prep, Oxford

Each art and DT course will provide lots of ideas for projects in the classroom and is suitable for specialist and non-specialist teachers and teaching assistants. Each course costs £110, which includes lunch and materials. To book, please contact Pat Harrison on 01371 856823, or: admin@satips.com

DT

29 March	Leading a DT department	Abingdon Prep, Oxford
21 May	Textiles	Bilton Grange, Rugby
9 June	Health and Safety in the DT department	Abingdon Prep, Oxford
16 June	Resistant materials - project ideas in wood, plastic and metal	Abingdon Prep, Oxford

IAPS events

18-20 April	IAPS Chess Tournament Open to all players from IAPS prep schools and caters for players of all levels of ability. For further details contact David Archer archerd@aldro.org	Aldro School, Surrey
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ISA courses and events

9 March	Junior Schools Conference - Making the Curriculum Work for Your School This highly regarded Junior Schools Conference with leading educationalists in their field will explore different approaches to the primary curriculum and focus on raising achievement. There will also be opportunities for lively debate and networking. Programme Outline: The competency-based curriculum – how to engage learners and raise Achievement, Primary Years Programme (PYP), Raising standards in Maths through individualised learning, Talking beyond the page: reading and responding to picture books and other multimodal texts.	Mercure Parkside Hotel, Milton Keynes
3 March	EYFS Inspection This course has been designed for EYFS practitioners by a recently trained ISI EYFS Lead Inspector and an experienced EYFS Teacher/Manager. It will look at the key elements of the EYFS Inspection schedule and focus on the regulatory compliance which will help you to prepare for a successful inspection. Programme Outline: Understanding the EYFS Framework and what it means for independent Schools, Inspecting practice in EYFS, Preparing your inspection documentation including Statutory Requirements, Preparing and supporting EYFS staff for inspection.	Dodderhill School, Droitwich

Other prep school Courses

10th March	English Key Stage 2 English Refresher: Developing New Ideas	Port Regis Prep School, Dorset
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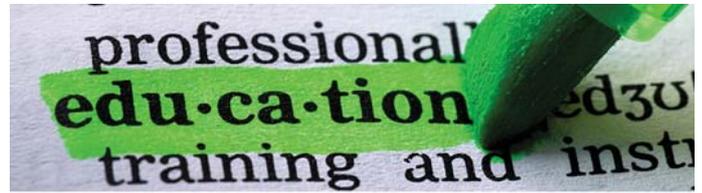
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