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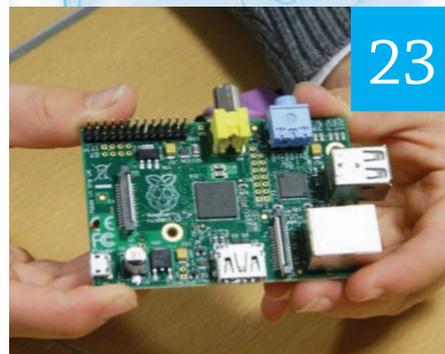
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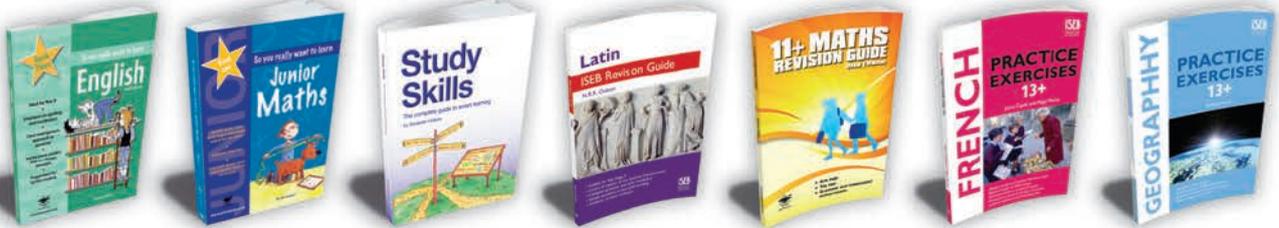
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From the editor



The summer term brings enriching trips and excursions, opportunities for outdoor learning, sports days, art exhibitions and, perhaps less delightfully, examinations and report writing. While it is easy to get caught up in all this activity, the summer term is also the perfect time to look back over the year that is finishing and forward to the new academic year.

Schools need no reminding that the end of the summer term is a time for goodbyes. Moving on is exciting; fresh horizons and new beginnings beckon. Who doesn't welcome the chance to leave behind experiments that didn't work, ideas that were never developed, plans that went awry? For some the transition will be harder than for others but as we plan our farewells we remind ourselves that, for pupils and colleagues alike, learned skills, rich experiences and good memories will help them thrive.

Of course not everyone leaves at the end of the summer term and there will be changes and opportunities for those staying behind too. So perhaps among all the leave-taking and the looking forward we also need to be reflecting on the year just finishing. How far have we come this year? How far will we go next year?

Now is an excellent time to look at the demands of the curriculum and to build in new experiences. The sustainability article shares the sorts of discussions we should be having about how we can embed this philosophy into our schools. Or maybe it is time to go all iPad, or Google? What about developing a digital curriculum? Is it time to look again at your pupils' emotional needs? How about doing something different to help the move from junior to senior school? Can phonics teaching be spiced up? Perhaps puppets could help in the classroom? Is handwriting being neglected?

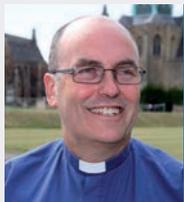
This issue is packed full of ideas to get your staffroom talking and thinking: use it to plan next year's educational journey. On this journey you may need to change route or double back on yourself. You'll almost certainly need to take detours – and the odd risk. I am afraid your satnav won't work. But the view when you get there will be fantastic.

As you set off towards those beguiling new horizons – whether you are staying or moving on – do send us a postcard. We love hearing from you: when you share your good ideas, they just keep spreading.

Michèle 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: Hope against Hope



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.

At the end of the New Testament's celebrated hymn to love in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, St Paul identifies three abiding spiritual virtues – *faith, hope and love*.

Love has primacy and faith is often regarded as being in the silver medal position, but hope, by contrast, jogs in almost apologetically to receive the bronze!

We often think of hope as mere aspiration – “I hope to buy a new car” or “I hope to go to university” or “I hope to go to Spain for my holidays.” However, St Paul was considering hope on a more fundamental, existential level.

It seems to me that we only explore this understanding of hope when a situation becomes hopeless. If I lose my job or wrestle to cope with a depressive illness or receive a devastating medical diagnosis, the loss of hope can be all-pervasive, covering everything like a dark shroud. There seems to be no way out, no light at the end of the tunnel.

In such situations, even the tiniest shaft of light can give strength to carry on.

“When everything seems lost, then anything is something.” Christian hope provides this light. It asks us to trust that, sometimes despite all evidence to the contrary, God knows what he is doing, and that the sun will shine again tomorrow.

Hope believes that ultimately (in this world or the next), in the words of Mother Julian of Norwich, “All shall be well.”

Goodbye Mr/Mrs/ Miss/Ms Chips?

Dr Matthew Jenkinson, Director of Studies at New College School, Oxford, says we should rethink our attitude to teacher retention: it is nothing new that some teachers leave the profession after a few years

The best maths teacher I ever had was a man named Steven Brown. He taught me for the first year of my GCSE course, before leaving to become a man of the cloth. The widespread sense of disappointment about his decision was palpable. Not because of any hostility towards his sense of calling, but because it was clear he was going to be a huge loss to the teaching profession. He had a sense of calm authority, he knew his subject inside out, he seemed to enjoy his time in the classroom, and he was able to communicate the subject with apparently effortless clarity. As this was in the maintained sector, Mr Brown would these days be included in the government's teacher retention statistics – statistics that are frequently trumpeted in the media as evidence that there is a crisis in recruiting teachers and making sure they stay in their jobs.

The statistics are issued in the expectation that we will beat ourselves up about the conditions experienced by teachers. At first sight they do seem shocking. In the parliamentary Education Committee's report *Great Teachers: Attracting, Training and Retaining the Best*, we are told that 'of those who are employed in the maintained sector in the first year of qualifying, 73% were still teaching in the maintained sector five years later', while 'the statistics for those who began teacher training show the percentage teaching in the maintained sector five years after qualification is even lower at 52% for undergraduate routes and 57% for postgraduate'.

There are reasons to be concerned. A lot of money is being spent on training people who spend very few years in the classroom. Of those who leave, some are bound to be real talents who are being driven away from teaching. Some teachers leave the profession for good reasons, which need to be addressed. Yet little opportunity is taken to temper shocking retention statistics with further thought and contextualisation.

We need not consider the money spent on teacher training as 'wastage', if the individuals who are trained go on to contribute positively to other areas of society once they have left the classroom. The skills that are imparted

and developed during a PGCE are transferrable to other spheres. Furthermore, if an individual realises that they are not suitable for a career in teaching, it is best for all concerned that they leave the classroom as soon as possible. The vast majority of people think they know what it is like being a teacher, because they saw teachers at work when they were pupils. But not even a PGCE placement can adequately get across the highs and lows of doing the job 365 days a year, year after year.

If, after appropriate support from senior colleagues, the highs are not sufficient to counteract the lows, there is no point in a new teacher staying on, affecting the morale of themselves, their students and colleagues, to the point that they are too entrenched and unattractive to potential employers in other sectors. It is best that they walk away early on, instead of just taking home the relatively good salary, going through the motions, moaning about every aspect of their job, and becoming a 'board blocker' in the way of more eager talent.

Also, it is not entirely clear whether these retention statistics, in the long view, are anything new. We just do not have reliable statistical information about how many teachers entered the profession in the past, and how many stayed for five years, or indeed until the end of their careers. It may just be that teaching has for centuries been considered, by a significant proportion of those who have entered it, a 'starter job': something worthwhile and interesting to do in one's twenties, before moving on to another walk of life. Indeed, history is littered with individuals who began life as teachers, but left the profession to have an even greater impact on the world.

If you were a boy in Worcester, Massachusetts, in the 1750s, it is likely that you would have come under the tutelage of a young man named John Adams. Adams wrote to a friend in September 1755 about life as a schoolteacher. He was evidently bored, as he entertained himself by trying to convey his experiences in the style of John Milton.

When the nimble hours have tackled Apollo's
coursers, and the gay deity mounts the eastern sky,

the gloomy pedagogue arises, frowning and lowering like a black cloud begrimed with uncommon wrath, to blast a devoted land. When the destined time arrives, he enters upon action, and, as a haughty monarch ascends his throne, the pedagogue mounts his awful great chair, and dispenses right and justice through his whole empire. His obsequious subjects execute the imperial mandates with cheerfulness, and think it their high happiness to be employed in the service of the emperor. Sometimes paper, sometimes his penknife, now birch, now arithmetic, now a ferule, then A B C, then scolding, then flattering, then thwacking, calls for the pedagogue's attention. At length, his spirits all exhausted, down comes pedagogue from his throne and walks out in awful solemnity, through a cringing multitude. In the afternoon, he passes through the same dreadful scenes, smokes his pipe, and goes to bed. Exit muse.

One need not be a scholar of seventeenth-century epics – or mock epics – to realise that Adams did not really enjoy his experience as a schoolteacher. Indeed, he lasted for about three years, before seeking alternative employment in the law. But – and I find this a staggering

thought – Adams left behind him dozens of children who had been taught by a man who would later help frame America's Declaration of Independence, become its second President, and help forge a brand new nation. If he had been persuaded to stay in the schoolroom, he would have brought his talents to generations of young people. But he would clearly have been miserable doing so, and his talents would have been denied to the many millions who have benefited from his pivotal role in the American Revolution.

The case study of John Adams is an extreme one. I am not suggesting that everyone who leaves teaching in twenty-first century Britain will go on to do things of earth-shattering importance, like Adams. But he is not alone in treating teaching as a 'starter career' before going on to other great things. If TS Eliot had remained teaching at Highgate or the Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe, it is unlikely that he would have penned *The Waste Land* or won the Order of Merit, the Nobel Prize for Literature, or the Presidential Medal of Freedom. If William Golding had spent his entire career teaching at Bishop Wordsworth's School, Salisbury, he probably would not have written *Lord of the Flies*, nor won the Booker Prize, nor been knighted, nor – like TS Eliot – been awarded the Nobel Prize for



There are many people who will enter teaching for a few years in the future, before going on to do great things elsewhere. We should not wring our hands over this, but rather celebrate teaching as a dynamic and refreshing profession that needs those who are just passing through as well as its experienced hands

Literature. If DH Lawrence had stayed at the British School, Eastwood or put to use his teaching certificate from University College, Nottingham, it is unlikely that he would have ended up, as EM Forster called him, 'the greatest imaginative novelist of [their] generation'.

The list goes on: George Orwell taught at The Hawthorns High School before becoming one of the most important novelists of the twentieth century. Thomas Paine was a schoolteacher in London before going on to become a revolutionary political theorist. We need not focus only on authors, many of whom would make a natural progression from teaching literature to writing it. Christa McAuliffe taught at Benjamin Foulois Junior High School, Thomas Johnson Middle School, and Concord High School, before becoming an astronaut on the Challenger Space Shuttle. And let's not forget Gorden Sumner, who taught at St Paul's First School in Cramlington, before launching a music career as Sting, and winning eleven Grammy Awards for his solo work, among many other accolades.

We should neither underestimate what they all brought to the classroom during their relatively brief teaching careers. Nor should we bewail their decision to take their talents to, and make significant contributions in, other areas. Similarly, there are many people who will enter teaching for a few years in the future, before going on to do great things elsewhere. We should not wring our hands over this, but rather celebrate teaching as a dynamic and refreshing profession that needs those who are just passing through

as well as its experienced hands. The maintained and independent sectors have some demands in common, as well as some demands that are wildly divergent. Yet it is unlikely that any of these demands are going to diminish in the near future. Unless there is a seismic cultural shift in the way children are brought up, or independent schools abandon the educational arms race to out-compete the school down the road, the demands placed on teachers will continue as they are or become even more challenging.

For the sake of everyone – not least the people who are going to be taught by them – there is no point keeping in the profession those who cannot cope with the stresses and would be happier elsewhere. Indeed, they should be encouraged to take what they have learnt from a PGCE or their time in the classroom, to make a positive contribution to another area of society, leaving space for members of the generation below them to come through and have a go. Yes, some children will experience the disappointment of seeing a much-valued teacher exit the profession, just as I had to watch my excellent maths teacher pack away his board markers. But this is not something new. It has happened for centuries, and it has freed many generations of pupils from teachers who desperately wanted to be somewhere else. And it has allowed those former teachers to do other things of huge consequence, such as – I don't know – helping found the United States of America, going into space, winning a Nobel Prize, or becoming an *Englishman in New York*.

Can happiness be taught?

Dr Trevor Lee, Headmaster of Northwood Prep School, says that it's time we move towards a 'well-being curriculum' and invest as much effort in supporting our pupils' emotional needs as their academic development

As teachers and school leaders, we're not often afforded the luxury of time to consider the bigger picture about what we are all trying to achieve – we have classes to teach, budgets to organise, parents, staff and students to meet. In the last five years, however, I've been fortunate enough, through my travels as part of my research, to share rich conversations with other colleagues involved in education, from all over the world.

What amazes me is the way in which beliefs about the central purpose of our work in schools are still heavily contested. Could it be that our fundamental beliefs about the purpose and function of education have been blurred in the race for league table positions based on exam results? In North London, entry to academically selective senior schools has been the central obsession for decades and a matter, to echo the late Bill Shankly's words, more important than life or death.

I am arguing that, as important as entry to senior schools has become, sometimes we have to use a telescope to see the bigger picture about the nature and dimensions of a good education rather than be always enslaved by the use of the microscope of data analysis in our path to school improvement. Many cannot see beyond this to recognise that there is far more to a good education than a test result. Surely it is about the formation of a virtuous character?

Notwithstanding the hollow rhetoric about the development of all aspects of the educational experience provided for students contained in many school promotional websites, prospectuses and mission statements, it can be argued that it is the statistically measurable content of assessments that is one of the principle drivers of education currently in the UK. As Tom Peters and Robert Waterman remind us, in their book *In Search of Excellence*: 'what gets measured, gets done.' This places school leaders who hold a broader view of the purpose of education in a dilemma – the purpose they give to education is often at variance to the meaning assigned by other members of society.

After many years of central government obsession with testing there is a strong desire in many for more freedom. In response, this article is a call to action for all of us – teachers and school leaders – to find time in our busy schedules to review our own priorities and to reflect on why we were called to do this work in the first place.

At our school, we have, as a team, achieved the highest academic standards – 58 awards in a range of academic, artistic and sporting scholarships in the last three years alone, won by a mere 80 Year Eight students during this period. General knowledge levels are impressive, we have won five Maths Olympiad medals and are involved in Singapore Maths and Philosophy for Children programmes. These innovations are impressive but not sufficient. Our well-being initiative at Northwood Prep has had a profound impact on teachers as we substitute the vague notion of 'happiness' with the compound noun 'well-being.' It is vital to actively promote student well-being for a number of reasons, despite the complexities involved. At the core of this argument is the notion that developing a holistic approach, where due regard is given to student well-being, should become a key school aim. I see five imperatives that justify the inclusion of student well-being in schools.

Firstly, there are ethical imperatives if we are to move against rising trends in student anxiety and depression and while few interventions, if any, have been properly researched, most have been raised somewhere in the research literature, albeit in a rather tentative way. It is likely that intervening more effectively and imaginatively could significantly improve life experiences, and reduce adolescent mortality through reducing suicide rates. If we can accurately assess mental health problems, and we know both how to intervene and also that such intervention may work, then there's an ethical imperative to lead improvement initiatives immediately.

Secondly, there has been a legislative imperative in the UK: the government's Every Child Matters reforms supported by the Children Act 2004 placed a duty of well-being on schools as does our inspection system. Student well-being

has thus become a national concern. We in the UK have suffered from initiative overload for decades but there is a stirring in government that chimes with the current spirit of the age in a time of economic austerity. Even Prime Minister David Cameron is trying to draw attention to this concept – in the midst of public service cuts and soaring living costs: “It’s time we admitted that there’s more to life than money and it’s time we focused not just on GDP (gross domestic product) but on GWB – general well-being. Well-being can’t be measured by money or traded in markets,” he added. ‘It’s about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our culture and, above all, the strength of our relationships. Improving our society’s sense of well-being is, I believe, the central political challenge of our times.” As a result, the UK Office for National Statistics has led some research called the National Well-being Project, which sought to establish the key areas that matter most to people’s well-being. The initial results make interesting reading.

Thirdly, surveys suggest that clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties are restricted to a minority of around one in 10 children aged 11 to 15 years, who show one or more of these problems at any given point in time. An important issue, though, is whether these types of difficulties are increasing. What we are seeing with new data is that the trend has continued upwards in the UK. There is a wide range of possible causes for this. There is a need to have appropriate social goals, in contrast to a discourse of managing behaviour and a narrow focus on the ‘academic,’ which this discourse views as separate from the emotional and social.

Fourthly, there is a developing research base that suggests that an effective programme for student well-being helps improve the academic outcomes of the majority of students who do not suffer depressive illnesses. Education for well-being could have important school improvement outcomes in terms of student attainment, behaviour, satisfaction, future life chances, resilience and creativity.

Finally, student well-being lessons can help join up the wider system. It’s easy for the principal purpose of schools to be centred on knowledge transmission and teaching rather than on the broader needs of the learner. In turn, students are expected to conform to the process of school rather than schools serving the needs of its students.

Can happiness be taught? Probably not, just in the same way as it cannot be bottled or demonstrated on a spreadsheet. It seems to me, however, that it’s possible to recognise three scientifically credible constituents of happiness that can be shared in classes.

The first route to greater happiness is hedonic, increasing positive emotion. Within limits, we can increase our positive emotion about the past, for example by cultivating gratitude and forgiveness, our positive emotion about the present, for example by savouring and mindfulness, and our positive emotion about the future, for example by building hope and optimism.

A second route to happiness involves the pursuit of ‘gratification.’ The key characteristic of gratification is that it engages us fully. Although there are shortcuts to pleasures, no shortcuts exist to gratification. Martin Seligman, former Chair of the American Psychological Association, argues that the pursuit of gratifications requires us to draw on character strengths such as creativity, social intelligence, sense of humour, perseverance, and an appreciation of beauty and excellence. The importance of character education is reflected in the creation of a new department at Birmingham University, the Jubilee Centre, that is already doing good work in this regard.

A third route to happiness comes from using individual strengths to belong to, and in the service of, something larger than ourselves; something such as knowledge, goodness, family, community, politics, justice or a higher spiritual power. The third route gives life meaning. This certainly chimes with our current fascination in the UK with the notion of citizens contributing to a ‘big society’.

If happiness cannot be taught I suggest that it might certainly be feasible to provide students with the necessary skills with which to nurture happiness themselves.

Simply described, schools have a twofold role in the promotion of happiness.

Firstly, the school itself must be a happy place to be. The basic needs of the students need to be met, the curriculums – formal, informal and hidden – must enable students to discover and develop their physical, intellectual and social strengths and abilities, and above all the school must create the conditions for excellence and allow its students to discover a sense of meaning and purpose that will carry them well beyond the school gates. This might be termed ‘education as happiness’.

Secondly, schools should give explicit guidance to their students on how happiness might be achieved in life and not just assume that happiness will result from the ordinary activities of school life; this might be termed ‘educating for happiness’. It is this second suggested role that is controversial and that has attracted a great deal of media attention in recent times.

Wellington College in the UK is leading the way in this respect. I researched Wellington’s programme thoroughly through a five-year longitudinal study. The school’s work has been informed by a positive psychological approach, espoused by Martin Seligman, Daniel Goleman, Richard Layard and more indirectly Howard Gardner. Wellington’s well-being course is divided into six areas. Students learn: how to improve the way their mind works through the way they manage their bodies; how to manage their subconscious mind and be aware of how it can influence the conscious mind; how simply being out in the natural world can increase their well-being; that it’s not good to immerse themselves in the fantasy world of television and video games; how to resolve conflict with others, and the benefits of stillness and mindfulness meditation. The lessons take



place once a fortnight and last for 40 minutes. Students who took part in a study I conducted in 2010, reported:

When the school's well-being campaign launched, we were all a bit sceptical. We thought the new master was just doing it to look good. Happiness lessons seemed an unlikely proposition. How could we be taught to be happy? We had already sat through PSHE (personal social and health education) and citizenship. We had this vision of getting a D mark for being gloomy or the occasional pubescent mood swing.

But our happiness lessons are actually well-being lessons. That is an important distinction.

Because you can't teach someone to be happy, you can only teach them to pretend to be happy. And if they are only pretending to be happy, that is no use to anyone. What the school is trying to do is give us some sort of basis, so that when we have a time of sadness or grief, we can deal with it constructively rather than turn to the false comforts of drugs and alcohol.

It is easy to get trapped in unhealthy relationships. What enables you to step out of them is your own self-worth and individuality. There is also a much more practical aspect. I know a lot of people use meditation to help them go to sleep. Small things like that can make a big difference to your day. An extra hour's sleep can really impact on your learning.

Students comment on the unique, useful and enjoyable nature of the well-being lessons, with 88 per cent indicating that they highly enjoy their well-being lessons and look forward to them; 85 per cent strongly agreeing that the lessons have meaningful content and are very worthwhile; 68 per cent stating that the lessons help them to become resilient and challenge negative thoughts; 72 per cent reporting that the lessons encourage them to become calmer in their thinking and more thoughtful and

understanding; and 66 per cent reporting that the lessons help them change their behaviour for the better and to recognise their individual strengths.

A key finding of my study is that **relationships matter a great deal**. The centrality of teacher-student relationships in the everyday experience of schooling is underdeveloped.

While it may seem more powerful to devise a programme of activities, it's the everyday and pervasive power of relationships that affect learning, social development and mental health. Reforming the curriculum is not sufficient: it will need a skilled and empathetic workforce to deliver such a programme.

The challenge for teachers and school leaders is to ensure that this vitally important aspect of school life does not become implicit or hidden at a time when the main pressure is on assessment or a school's position in league tables. This will require a new sense of conviction and a new style of courage on the part of teachers and school leaders, particularly as school leaders decide on priorities and then decide what is really worth fighting for. What's clear is that the well-being of students is a long-term project that is vital to improving attainment. The expectations of students as well as families and employers have to be addressed. This requires a new way of looking at how teachers and school leaders work as they attempt to follow their best instincts.

References

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Dr Trevor Lee is Headmaster at Northwood Prep in north-west London, a school that has been recognised as outstanding in all aspects by the Schools' Inspectorate in the United Kingdom. He teaches internationally on strategy, leadership and student well-being. His latest book, *Schools: the happiest Days of our Lives?* is available on Amazon



Freedom to think

Headmaster of Daneshill, Andrew Hammond, enjoys some debating and thinking in class

“Now what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of service to them.”

So said Thomas Gradgrind in *Hard Times*. I suspect, if he had been real rather than fictional, and if he had existed in the twenty-first century rather than the nineteenth, and if I had met him – which, I appreciate is rather a lot of ‘ifs’ – then we would have had a rather robust conversation on pedagogy and practice. He might have said something like: “I’ve been

teaching for thirty years and I see no reason to change my teaching style now, Hammond.” To which I would have responded: “No, Sir, you have been teaching for one year, thirty times. That is not the same thing.” He would have retorted with: “The acquisition of knowledge is the basis of a good education, Sir,” and I might have replied: “No, it is the acquisition of understanding; that is not the same thing.”

Gradgrind might have found solace in DH Lawrence’s classic tale of a teacher’s despair in *Last Lesson of the Afternoon*. “When will the bell ring and end this weariness? How long have they tugged the leash, and strained apart,

my pack of unruly hounds! I cannot start them again on a quarry of knowledge they hate to hunt, I can haul them and urge them no more.”

Gradgrind might suggest that the ‘unruly hounds’ should indeed be punished for straining on the leash. A sharp swish of a stick or a rubbery slap from a slipper might have been just enough to haul them into line – back into that passive state of unquestioning acceptance which affords their teacher a quieter life. And yet I can’t help feeling that the unruly hounds were only straining at the leash because the teacher wasn’t going fast enough; you have to be quick if you want to exercise the quick minds of children.

And this is why I’ve introduced a new subject at Daneshill – DTS (Debating and Thinking Skills). I teach weekly classes in DTS to all children in Years 6, 7 and 8. It’s so much fun to allow them some time off the leash once in a while: time when they must think for themselves, roam free, seek out answers and grapple with truths. There are few things more rewarding than setting inquiring minds a philosophical problem to solve and then allowing them time to wrestle with it, in groups, in pairs and individually. This is time well spent in my view.

The other day I threw my hungry pupils the following morsel:

“The stationery cupboard in the corner of the classroom is not a cupboard at all; it is a time machine. Your Headmaster has been dabbling with the science of time travel and I think I’ve finally cracked it. So come with me and together we’ll travel to the future – let’s say this time next week. The technology is still a little primitive and it will take a while. Probably around about seven days. So who’s coming with me?”

The hounds were so eager to debate this you could almost see them drooling. Excitedly they debated what made a time machine, what time-travel meant and, therefore, if Mr H’s time machine was phoney or not. One bright spark shouted out: “Sir, if we come with you on that journey, when we arrive we won’t be stepping out into the future, we’ll be stepping out into the present.”

I smiled and said: “You may be right, but even if my time machine moved faster and we could reach this time next week in just a few hours, you would still be stepping out into your present, because you would have experienced the time it took to get there. So it’s still your present. All the people you would see around you would also be experiencing life in their present too. So in what way would

a faster time machine work? It is no better than mine.”

It was a good lesson.

The following week I glanced towards the cupboard door again and smiled. The hounds tutted and huffed in that charming way children do when they are embarrassed by the adult in the room. I said: “You know that stationery cupboard in the corner?”

They rolled their eyes at me.

“Well, it is not a stationery cupboard at all. It is an operating theatre. I have been doing some research into the brain. I have finally managed to isolate and remove the sad gene, thus rendering your default setting happy for the rest of your life. It is a quite painless operation, only takes twenty minutes, but it is irreversible. So, who’s the first one in?”

We debated that one too. They tugged and pulled and grappled and wrestled. How wonderful it was, eventually, that the main reason why no-one would have the operation was because if their sad gene was removed, they would no longer be able to empathise with their friends when they felt sad and so they would ultimately lose their friends. (They’re a friendly lot, Daneshillians.) To which I rather cruelly said: “So what? You’d be happy about that. Come on, you’re not thinking this through!” But still no one entered the operating theatre that day.

I led the hounds on another venture recently. (I rarely wait for them to tug the leash, I pull them!). I presented them each with one sheet of paper. On one side was written the following sentence: ‘The statement on the reverse side of this page is true.’ They turned it over and found: ‘The statement on the other side of this page is false.’ You can imagine, we debated that one for hours. In fact, we are still debating it whenever we have lunch together. Can the two sentences co-exist?

Getting children to think – I mean really think – is the most important practice in schools today. Facts are important, unquestionably, and we need children to be able to assimilate, process and retain information – their computational capacity is important and it’s right that it is weighed, measured and tested occasionally, notwithstanding that: a) knowledge retention does not tell us innate intelligence and b) intelligence is not a fixed pot anyway. But there is no more noble (and enjoyable) a pursuit for teachers than to encourage children to become deep and effective thinkers.

What do you think? What would Govegrind think? (No, that wasn’t a typo.)

The stationery cupboard in the corner of the classroom is not a cupboard at all; it is a time machine

When two worlds collide?

Matthew Bryan, Head of Classics at Summer Fields, Oxford, says the best modern prep schools have their roots firmly in the past

nescire autem quid ante quam natus sis acciderit, id est semper esse puerum

But not to know what happened before you were born – that is to remain forever a child
Cicero

In a recent sermon at a school chapel service, the preacher began with some fine words: “One of the best things about prep school is ... you learn Latin!” As a teacher of Latin and Greek, I was thrilled. I spotted a couple of children, however, who looked less than convinced. It set me thinking, however, about just what were the best things about prep school. In the time that a child might spend at prep school, be it as little as two or as many as nine years, what might be the very best elements of that way of life?

Elsewhere in these pages you will read about the sparkling innovation that is evident in prep schools around the country. Unfettered by SATs, public examinations and governmental pressure, prep schools can set their own

agenda based on putting children first and exams second. This is education in the true sense of the word, for the Latin verb suggests drawing out skills that lie latent within the students, rather than cramming their heads with ‘stuff’.

This innovation (in the form of tablet computers, interactive boards, independent research, blogs *etc*) stands at the cutting edge of today’s world and is very much to be welcomed. Many prep schools are fortunate enough to have both the financial and human resources to seek out the most exciting and rewarding methods available. Modern education is like a tree which pushes up into the sky, spreading out and reaching towards the stars. Just like a tree, however, the true strength of education lies in its roots, deeply set into the ground and providing a connection between the future and the past

Technological wizardry and wood panelling

Among the bright displays and technological wizardry of the modern prep school, you will see the wood panelling marked out with names of boys and girls, scholars and school captains, of time gone by. You will see photographs of schools and teams that stretch back across the generations, portraits of Headteachers from a different age. There are buildings which impart an unmistakable sense of history and tradition, Byzantine customs, terminology and names of classes which defy understanding, yet are of utmost importance to students past and present. To be at prep school is to connect with history in the best possible way: to live it and reshape it for the future, just as prep school will shape the student.

The word ‘prep’, of course, is an abbreviation of ‘preparatory’. Clearly, it is the job of the prep school to prepare its students for life at their next school. They must learn to work individually, to pass exams of one kind or another, and in a team, to play a variety of team sports or partake in drama or music. Manners are important, as is tidiness and responsibility. The best prep schools feel like extended families, where no one is isolated or simply out for themselves. In a constantly evolving jobs market where we have no idea what industry will look like in 15 years’ time, the one constant will always be a premium placed on those who can get the most out of themselves and others when working collectively.





Global markets of the future

As an enthusiastic advocate for classical languages, I spend a great deal of time extolling the virtues of the acquisition of core, transferable skills, such as precise analysis, application of general precepts to specific situations, lateral thinking and cross-topic leaps of imagination. I do not seek to teach my students what they will need when they grow up: far more valuable to them are the skills to assess situations and diagnose solutions for themselves. Such skills have worked in education since the Renaissance and will be required more, not less, in the fluid and global markets of the future. If, at the same time, the students have learned morality and what it is to be – in Aristotle's words – a 'social animal' then the subjects which the University of Oxford has always called the *literae humaniores* – 'more human studies' – will have served their purpose. Classics at prep schools can and should be the embodiment of cutting-edge education set in the best kind of traditional context.

Self-awareness, the confidence to perform in front of an audience, tolerance and humility: these are attributes not easily quantified. Just as the political rhetoric surrounding schools has underlined the importance of notions of standards, targets and performance, seemingly all with reference to league tables and one-size-fits-all inspection criteria, so it would seem that the currencies of exploration, humanity, risk-taking, pure and simple fun, have been devalued.

Of paramount importance is the happiness of the boys and girls who are on the roll: where sadly the much-trumpeted 'choice' has failed to materialise for too many in the state sector, every prep school is mindful of the glittering array of choice that exists in independent schools. There are no

laurels on which schools could rest, even if they wanted to: no league tables or percentages of pass rates. The way to judge a school is to visit, talk with students, experience lessons and feel the atmosphere and ethos. Prep schools are cosmopolitan places which demand open-mindedness where others may be able to indulge in parochialism. Their students are all the better for this.

While it might seem at first glance that there is potential for the contemporary revolution in education and educational methods to clash with traditional schooling, nothing could be further from the truth. Having the autonomy to set both curricular and non-curricular activities independently of political interference brings a responsibility to be ever-vigilant and self-scrutinising. Tradition is of vital importance, but never simply for its own sake. It is to be weighed carefully with innovation, judged on its true merits and always with the purpose of education in mind. In today's increasingly competitive educational market, the school which does not seek progress will fall behind, but it is very often in our past where we can see our future.



Nurturing a sustainable mind

In the first part of a two-part article, Robin Davies, Headmaster of Barfield School, reviews the current issues in education about sustainable matters and considers what ingredients are needed to create the most sustainably minded child

It is a regulation of the Independent Schools Inspectorate that schools give their pupils 'experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education'. It is an ongoing challenge for school leaders and managers to ensure that children's journeys through their school years is suitably peppered with the full range of these 'experiences'. It stands to reason that we want them to be well-versed in their own, and others' language, to be able to count, to be able to analyse and understand scientific, geographical, historical and cultural circumstances, and to be artistically and musically creative and physically competent, and so on. However, there is an area, as yet, not

required by the regulators, which should be thrown into the mix. It is the education of (and for) our children about awareness of sustainable issues, and the empowerment to act upon it.

There is no real surprise about its limited presence in schools, or that there are no obligatory expectations for it to date, when we consider the established reasons why we educate as we currently do:

- The historical purpose of education has been to train a generation to be a capable workforce of the future for national economic growth, so that our country can continue to be a world leader. Judging by how



Parents wish for younger children “to be happy”

our national statistics of achievement by children at different Key Stages continue to be compared internationally, it seems that this backdrop still exists.

- Schools are either chasing the highest positions in the league tables so prioritising examination results over content, or they are chasing the market, where examinations results tend to be bigger draw for prospective parents over green credentials. Subsequently, teachers are duty bound to follow a prescriptive syllabus that cannot address the sustainable issues collectively.
- Prospective parents typically share two main wishes for their children. The first wish, usually for younger children, is simply for them 'to be happy'. I hear this in so many meetings with parents, who hold anxieties about the world they are bringing their children into. Their peace of mind is achieved by knowing that their toddler is happily heading off to school each day while they are off working. And who can blame them? The second wish is for the children to be receiving the very best, most rigorous teaching and learning, and that they will make the grades. This is particularly more prevalent in the run up to senior school entrance exams or university application.

A child's effective development of literacy and numeracy, or assimilation of scientific, technological, artistic or physical skills, will probably increase their opportunities and prospects as they grow up and go out into the big wide working world. In comparison, a child's ability to appreciate, respect and actively support the natural world is less likely to set them up for life, and therefore is often little more than an extra add-on in many schools. Environmental literacy, eco-sensitivity, naturalist intelligence – whatever you wish to call it is just not considered important enough to be statutory, and until as such time, it will not get suitable air-time.

The compelling reason

But there are increasingly overt signs of climate change being a reality, with extreme weather events being recorded – more noticeable each year around the world – as well as the accumulation of scientific data proving that global warming is happening, and that there will be worse to come. Reports on decreasing habitats and biodiversity around the world, and impending 'resource wars' are just hints of the problem we face as a race. All told, the global changes we are experiencing and are likely to experience mean that we must apply more emphasis on nurturing a greater mind set for sustainable living, if our children and their children are to have a good quality of life and living. In short, our children need to learn how to be more sustainably minded, and we need to create a better learning platform for them to do so.

Logistical issues

It is not just that sustainable thinking is a lower order priority to central government (who just want the progress



Food and drink at Barfield School

and achievement data) ... and to many schools (who just want the exam results for the league tables) ... and many parents (who just want happy children and/or grades) ... and teachers (who just want to teach to their syllabus). The practical process of delivering a programme that nurtures an affinity for our local and global environment, and a sense of responsibility, which is action and adjustment-based, has inherent complexities. One problem is that sustainable issues do not exist simply as a series of stand-alone teachable topics as they are not a straightforward linear set of learning objectives to be listed in a departmental scheme of work. Looking at the titles of the 'Doorways' from the Sustainable Schools initiative set up last decade, and the themes of the Ecoschools programme, it is apparent that these are inherently cross-curricular themes.

Contents of Sustainable Schools 'Doorways'

- buildings and grounds
- energy and water
- food and drink
- global dimension
- inclusion and participation
- local well-being
- purchasing and waste
- travel and traffic



The 'Doorways' are excellent for providing a framework for a school to focus on

Ecoschools themes or areas

- water
- waste/litter
- energy
- nature and biodiversity
- school grounds
- transport/sustainable mobility
- healthy living

Local Agenda 21 and climate change.

In a prep school set-up, the *modus operandi* is typically through a departmental structure for Years 3 upwards, with the ultimate aim of steering the children towards their subject examinations. This does not naturally lend itself towards such cross-curricular or thematic approaches that are required for learning the full set of sustainable ropes.

The 'Doorways' or themes are excellent for providing a framework for a school to focus on, for it to address each one in a systematic and efficient manner, and hopefully tick boxes or raise a flag thereafter. They may well be engaging the children, parents, staff and governors alike in a constructive way towards a shared aim, with social, economic and environmental benefits. They are, however, an external framework being put upon the individual, and

in doing that, they may well miss the most essential point that is required at the very core of our problem. Are they creating a platform for each young mind at the school to be as environmentally aware, tuned-in and willing to be action-based as they possible can be?

The 'Doorways' also collectively form a multi-layered, indeed, multi-dimensional cobweb of interconnected facts and concepts. Similarly they are not just a range of facts or figures to be learnt, but ideas and concepts to be formulated, which should be resultant in some form of environmentally-based action and outcome for child, teacher, parent and school. There is an underpinning experiential requirement with all of the themes to make them real and relevant.

The question we must all be asking is this: What programme of study creates the most sustainably minded young person?

As it stands there is no definitive programme. There are many examples of supreme efforts to create high levels of sustainable thinking in many of our schools. And yet there is the making of a PhD thesis (or two) in the study of what various schools are doing, and what the outcomes are proving to be, when it comes to the business of creating sustainably-minded children.

In the next issue of *Prep School*, Robin Davies outlines how Barfield School is helping pupils to think about sustainable issues

The digital world of possibility

Ross Wallis, head of art at Sidcot, has a confession to make ...

My name is Ross Wallis, I teach art, and I am addicted to the iPad ... this is sounding a bit like an AA meeting, except that I believe my addiction is a good thing. I have no intention of giving it up, and I am keen to get others hooked too!

I was exploring digital media before Apple blossomed, in the days of the Amiga and BBC, and always for the same reason: because there can be an addictive magnetism to working with digital and screen based media that will draw students in, fire them up, make them passionate, and get them going – particularly some of my more reluctant boys (and get them thorough examinations!).

Over the years I have often heard other art teachers and artists express an opinion that digital media is somehow too virtual, not real enough, not messy, almost by implication that it is not real art, but believe that this very virtuality is the reason that some students have taken to it; there is a delete key, as many iterations of a piece as one wishes to save, plenty of possibilities for creative accidents, and there are filters (cleverly creative algorithms, that do sometimes beg the question as to whether the original programmer might need recognition as the true artist). And for me, above all else, there are layers.

As an artist I have always sat somewhere between the photomechanical and happy accident, working with montage, experimental photographic processes and printmaking, so for me computer art really came as an extension of the work that I had been doing before, only more so, and not quite so messily. The reason Apple became so successful was that Steve Jobs saw the computer not just as a commercial number cruncher, but as a personal device, and indeed, as a generator of works of art, and a work of art in its own right. A while before the birth of the first Apple, Jobs was attending an evening class in calligraphy, and it was his love of calligraphy and understanding of font, his development of moveable type, and insistence on a simple, beautiful, easy to use, object-oriented GUI (graphical user interface) that has really been behind the PC revolution.

There is also a time-based element to digital media, possibilities for animation and film, and phenomenal possibilities for sharing and collaboration, and combining photographs, film, type, CGI (computer generated imagery) and clever algorithms.

And now, with touch sensitive devices, again with Apple leading the way, we have a device that is feels very beautiful and natural to use, responding to touch and gesture.

David Hockney has given the iPad respectability in relation to a more 'traditional' art. Not that this was his intention, Hockney has always played with digital media. I have a memory of watching a documentary, maybe *Tomorrow's World*, possibly even before I left school some time in the mid-1970s, where Hockney was drawing with a graphics tablet and computer programme. He also did lots of experimenting with Xerox machines, fax machines and Polaroid cameras; he has always been a pioneer in using these new devices for artistic ends. (The early innovations, such as the GUI, were developed by Parc, which was a R&D division of Xerox).

So, you can see the breadth and depth of my addiction, but how does it manifest?

I have been taking my iPad along to the weekly life drawing class that I run for my senior students, and playing with various apps, and also taking it to pubs and acoustic music clubs, where I sit in a corner and draw the performers and audience. Due to the nature of the iPad, it is not possible to easily create very detailed drawings, although some artists manage this, but it is a wonderful device for quick, fluid sketches, particularly when done with fingers. My personal favourite painting app at the moment is Procreate, which has some great brushes, and a beautiful smudge tool. I have been experimenting with drawings done straight, using fingers or a stylus, but also experimenting with the possibilities of starting with a photograph, and drawing over the top of it, smudging and distorting the photograph until the work loses some of its photographic feel. On the market now are some touch sensitive styluses, such as the Pogo Connect and Adonit Touch, which are expensive, but magical.

Other apps are Brushes, the one that Hockney has been using, Artrage, which migrated from PC to tablet, and Sketchbook Pro, which is a very professional app, developed by Alias, who are the company behind the massive 3D drawing software Maya.

There are other apps that I like as well. Alias produce a great, very simple drawing app called Ink, and, along similar lines, is an app called Zen Brush. There are so many good apps, it really is a case of downloading a few and trying them out. One that is very successful with many of my students is an



Some examples of Ross Wallis's iPad art, above and right

app called Flowpaper, which sort of draws for you, hence it's popularity, and Type Drawing is really good fun. If you want a cleaner, more graphic sort of app there are several vector based drawing apps such as Inkpad and iDesign. What I do is simply type 'best drawing app' or 'best vector app' into Google, and see what people recommend. There is also a great app called Discover Apps which is a very graphic way of exploring different apps – you type one app into Discover, and it shows you a range of related apps in a sort of spider diagram – really worth investing in.

Another way in which I have been using the iPad and iPhone is for collaborative art works, sending a photograph or a drawing to another artist, who alters and adds, then sends the image back. One of these games of 'image ping-pong' went on for years. I have been using this idea very successfully with my students as well, twining them with students in other schools. I love the fact that this game is rooted in the surrealistic game of Exquisite Corpse or Consequences. There are even some Exquisite Corpse apps on the app store – my favourite is called Exquis-C. I have played games that are wholly photomontage, wholly hand-drawn, using simple SMS apps on the iPhone, or full-blown 3D apps such as 1234D Sculpt.

The iPad is a fantastic tool for montage, using apps that have layers, and using a finger and a soft eraser to rub around one imported image to reveal images below. There are even apps such as 'Background Eraser' that will cut out backgrounds, and create .png files that can be pasted or opened in other apps. Adobe, the creators of Photoshop, has transported some of its phenomenal technology into touch apps such as Adobe Ideas and PS Touch. PS Touch in particular, which is now available for both tablet and smartphone devices, reproduces many of the features of

Photoshop, and will develop over time I am sure, to include more of the content aware editing that makes Photoshop such a powerful tool. One of the really powerful features of these devices is the possibility of swopping quickly from app to app in the creation of works of art.

We have also been using the iPads for creating animations, both hand-drawn with apps such as Animation Desk and Animation Studio, or fun apps such as Photo puppets, Puppet Pals, and Morfo. With recent iPads that have built in cameras, there are now plenty of possibilities for stop frame animation and film-making. I have just invested in a set of iPad cases from Makayama, which include a tripod mount, so that the iPad can be positioned for animation, or held steady for film making. We have just finished a set of films with a group of 12- and 13-year-olds, working in small groups, with an iPad per group. Although the camera on the iPad is not yet as good as I would like it to be, the possibility of filming, editing, creating a sound track, adding sound effects, titling, and publishing, all from the one device, is pretty awesome. There are music apps such as Thumb Jam, Rockmate and Garage Band, and possibilities for special effects with apps such as Green Screen or FX Studio.

I have not even started in this article to talk about the possibilities that the iPad offers for creating presentations, interactive books, playing educational games, interactive encyclopaedias or virtual gallery tours, nor have I even mentioned my other passion – iPhoneography – these will have to wait for a future article!

Ross Wallis is head of art at a small Quaker Independent school, Sidcot. www.artatsidcot.org. He is also the tutor for SATIPS Creative use of iPad course



A glimpse into the future

James Wilding, Head of Claires Court, and also the chair of ISAnet, gives us insight into the digital life of his school, the questions they face and the solutions they have found

Clares Court has been using the current availability of machines ever since the modern era of computing in schools arrived. That's not to say anything other than currently we are using PCs and Macs and iPads and 'Droids and netbooks and 'phones and stuff. The clever bit is that we do (and have done) stuff like networking, remote desktop, intranet and extranet, thin-client, Wi-Fi and 'cloud' as and when they have been available and affordable. We went www.clarescourt.com etc earlier than most. Look back in the go-to lists of Sinclair and co, and you'll find that someone at Claires Court was rootling around, pioneering with the good guys. Check out the junior school's weblog history, and little boys were blogging and sharing their work using ManilaSites over 10 years ago, well before Facebook was founded. That's a good thing, by the way. Bob Barker, past pupil and founder/proprietor of Shinytastic, designs and guides our 'webthinking', though we either cannot or do not afford all he thinks we should. We have mail@clairescourt.com/net, facebook @twitter etc. We sweep the airwaves to protect our reputation, and we use social media to promote our best selves. As Moore's law might predict (if it covered human behaviours), we are having to double our efforts every two years to keep ourselves up with the game. Frankly, it feels rather more hard work even than that, just now, the way our digital life is growing so rapidly!

What we know about what works

Investors in online 'answers' have long sought the silver bullet. Sadly such a final solution does not exist. As a business that has seen a few busts in our time, this is what we have learned about choices in terms of what works and what does not, in education:

- No single technical answer fits the bill. The technology moves faster than the researchers can work to check effectiveness. As educators, it seems we are fuelled more by anecdote than evidence. Swivel-headed teachers and bursars see the latest technological gadget on a foreign field (digital scoreboard, Instagram posting or random email) and the 'thought' becomes the 'need' overnight. This Academic Principal thinks

little about knee-jerk purchases – we don't want to see costs affecting tuition fees unduly.

- There is a wealth of literature out there, and bands of educators across the globe who (despite corporate support) remain fiercely proud of being independent advocates of what actually works in schools. Adobe, Apple, Google and Microsoft all have 'fans' but most expert practitioners are multi-platform and grounded in the reality of budget, longevity and transferability of advice and solutions.
- "Everyone wants to offer proprietary software that will lock education into their system and that just isn't going to happen," said Prof Stephen Heppell, a digital education expert at Bournemouth University (BBC website 6 March 2013). "The rhetoric in schools now is about bringing your own device. If you have a child with a cutting-edge iPad why say, 'You can't bring that, you have to use this under-powered device we provide'?"
- Research by Professor Heppell and others indicates that there is no need to provide one device for every pupil.
- Schools need to provide as reliable a digital ecosystem in which appropriate knowledge and research can take place as they have previously done in their libraries.
- Parents need information and advice as to what works and what they need to do to protect and support their children.
- We must fully accept our responsibilities in terms of managing children. We simply cannot adopt the 'anything goes' policy.

Google Apps for Education (GAPE)

Before adopting this free to the education and charity sector set of tools, Claires Court talked to and worked with national and international publishing and software companies to source a suitable solution for a school that reaches from ages 3 to 18. A third-party technology company (C-Learning) introduced our work to Google. Google employees met with our pupils, and were deeply

impressed by the honesty and skills of those children and teachers involved.

Google accepted our proposition that:

- Teachers need training in the use of new softwares and this training needs to be allied to their educational value and the learning outcomes we seek to promote at subject level.
- Children and adults need ‘gateway’ ideas that lead them to the tools and services that are available – from which we developed the clairescourt.net website that points to these resources.
- Schools need independent advice from practitioners across the globe about what works.

Supported and quality assured by Google, C-Learning and Claires Court started to provide (from July 2011) similar schools with a series of training events, newsletters, conferences and personal visits to use Google Apps for Education.

GAFE provides within our walled garden of clairescourt.net (which we call the ‘Hub’) amongst others the following apps and tools for editing. These are provided at no cost to tuition fees.

Chrome browser	books
Chrome extensions	forms
Google search in all its forms	maps
gmail and video conferencing - 25GB	pictures
websites	videos
calendars	contacts and groups
Drive - 5GB on which we can find...	programming
docs	Google play and their entire suite of third party apps and extensions
slides	
sheets	

Eighteen months since ‘Going Google’

Clares Court has 200 staff and 900 children. (Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children are not included.) Each day, these staff and children, in all school departments work online.

- We have established reliable Wi-Fi across the school sites.
- We have over 400 laptop devices, plus 200+ static networked workstations.
- Staff, boys and girls can bring into school any device, yet no-one needs to.
- We use PCs, laptops, netbooks, Thin Clients, Chromebooks, iPads/iPods, slates, tablets and ‘phones to connect to the ‘Hub’ and ‘Drive’.

- Our pupils can access their work and the ‘Hub’ any time, any where, on anything.
- Teachers and pupils can interact so much more effectively, that both speak about this with enthusiasm and knowledge.
- Supporting children on ‘sick-leave’ could not be more effective, using the ‘Hub’.
- Schools, colleges, inspectorates, other professionals and even Google themselves visit frequently to learn more about what our children can do in the ‘Cloud’.

For two years, Claires Court teachers and pupils have been invited to speak from the Google stand at Bett - here we are in 2013 - <http://schl.cc/5>

We still use:

- Microsoft Windows, Office, tools and networking for our backbone.
- Apple Macs, iPads, iTunes, GarageBand and other goods in our classrooms and media suites.
- Adobe Photoshop and many other proprietary softwares to improve our productivity.
- We also still use initiative and common sense to ensure that 50 per cent of what we do has no technology involvement whatsoever – we can more than just survive should the ‘lights’ go out.

Why did Claires Court ‘Go Google’ rather than ‘Go iPad’

Loads of schools have decided that children should provide the hardware to use in classrooms – at the cost to families rather than schools. The device of choice seems to be the iPad – cost to family above £350 per device, plus case and insurance. Claires Court has chosen not to go this way, but have defined a software solution that works on all devices with an internet browser.

- We have provided a ‘Cloud’-based solution for teachers and pupils to use, all the tools available without a need for downloads, parents’ account signature and potential theft issues, such as loss of device or data resident on the device.
- Our solution is device/hardware independent, will upgrade without costs, can be maintained without access to the devices concerned and as a result is future proof (as far as these things can be).
- Our walled garden is just that – some 10 terabytes of ‘Claires Court’ stored on a safe-harbour server managed by Google. We have full sight of our pupils and staff, their work and interactions. As education evidence makes increasingly clear, children do better when collaborating together rather than on individual one-to-one machines.
- Looking at any workstation at school, at work or at home – technology sits amongst all the other stuff we need to use – it is clear that it has not replaced books,

The technology is becoming invisible the more it is used at Claires Court

paper, print, phone or people. It is just one screen amongst many through which the individual can make suitable responses to the challenges asked of them.

- The fact that technology makes creating films easier than ever does not mean that the learner is now doing cleverer things. Writing a 500-word, accurately-spelled answer in black ink in an exam is still required – and this still needs much practice!

Gone Google, what next?

The technology is becoming more invisible the more it is used at Claires Court. Programmed learning through paper textbooks may disappear, but paper-based books from the library and departmental archives will still have their part to play.

- Claires Court has sourced a sub £80 slate, android 4.1.1 (Jellybean) 7" screen suitable for consuming media and web-print, wifi and 2 cameras, for users who want to 'pocket' their 'Hub' and 'Drive'. Available April-July 2013 from our UK supplier, 12 month warranty and return/repair facility.
- C-learning supply Chromebooks for parents and pupils, keyed to our 'Hub' with the management console control panel. A laptop is available for £250, which we can manage remotely and never have to install or update anything on – that's done automatically by our group policies and Google.
- Google Mentors/Digital Leaders from the student ranks are supporting younger pupils who need support to use the 'Hub'.
- Having gone to the 'Cloud', all sorts of other opportunities arise – here's one for each day of the week:
 - programming
 - designing in 3D
 - world class resources from the world
 - lessons retaught in a different way

- practise makes perfect exercises against the world
- revision packs for GCSE
- video-lessons for education

and so much more.

The question we will continue to ask is 'Are we doing the same thing using more expensive technology or are we gaining a new understanding and ways of working?' If it is the latter, then we are actually moving learning in the right direction.

A cautionary tale

New opportunities arise every year in this brave new world. Social media such as Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest all have made a niche for instant messaging, be that with text, pictures or projects. Devices such as iPad, Nexus, Wii and Blackberry all find ways of asking parents to sign up for services for their children to use.

- Children in Year 8 or below are not permitted to be signatories for social media, such as Facebook and Instagram. If parents sign them up, then parents should monitor closely. Caveat emptor! For GAFE, the school signs as the consenting adult for the children and supervises their usage.
- Google+ is a service for 13+. If users are found to contravene this condition, Google shuts their account down. Permanently. Even this Google centre can't get them back readily.
- iPad and phone app accounts often come with charges and conditions, such as this iPad problem from last week: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-21629210
- Every part of the 'Cloud' needs filtering at home – not just the PC. For example Twitter legal conditions require 18+ consent and monitoring (it's legal stuff) and because Twitter streams can be full of obscene pictures and movies – straight to the iPad or phone – parents need to know.
- And the children have access to more social media sites and utilities than I have ever heard of. You can't block them all.

Our next parents' evening at Claires Court, to explore further our computing work within our classrooms, is to take place in the first half of the summer term. Pupils, Google mentors, teachers and industry experts will be on hand to support parents in their understanding of what's hot and what's not in a 'digital life'

If you have any questions, James Wilding is happy to be contacted on jtw@clairescourt.net

How to get a head start in computer science

Jamie Mitchell, head of digital learning at St Faith's, Cambridge, shares his passion for this exciting new role

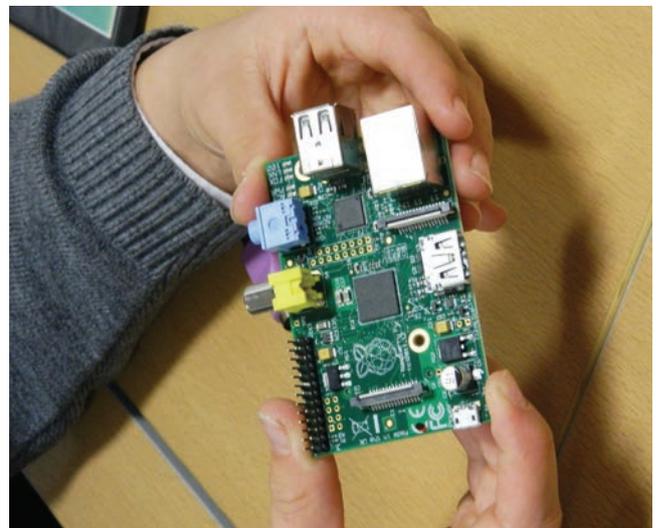
St Faith's is buzzing with excited children discovering a subject that they didn't even know existed until last September. Computer science – or compsci as they like to call it – has been added to their already diverse curriculum. Pupils from the age of nine have been developing their own computer games, building and programming robots, and learning to count all over again – this time in binary.

With the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, calling for a computing curriculum – devised by universities and businesses – to be released in 2014, this has left many schools at a loss for what to teach over the next couple of years. St Faith's, typically ahead of the game, created a new Head of Digital Learning role.

Mr Nigel Helliwell, Headmaster at St Faith's, Cambridge explains: "This was a critical appointment. We were looking for a talented individual with excellent computer programming skills and a strong track record in teaching. We are delighted with the appointment of Jamie Mitchell, who has already had a positive impact on the development of the children's understanding of and creativity in computer science. This subject is now well established in the school and will play a vital role in preparing our pupils for the increasingly digital future."

St Faith's views CompSci as a key subject: as well as arming pupils with useful skills which will help them survive in an ever more computerised world, it teaches them to organise their thoughts logically and hones their problem-solving skills, whilst putting their vivid imaginations to good use. They have created highly inventive computer games in their first half-term: a winged lion flying through various landscapes, avoiding trees, bubbles and planets; a three-eyed alien in a UFO abducting people from the streets; blobs of slime chasing each other through a psychedelic world. The children envisage their games then make them come to life, using a free programming language from MIT called Scratch.

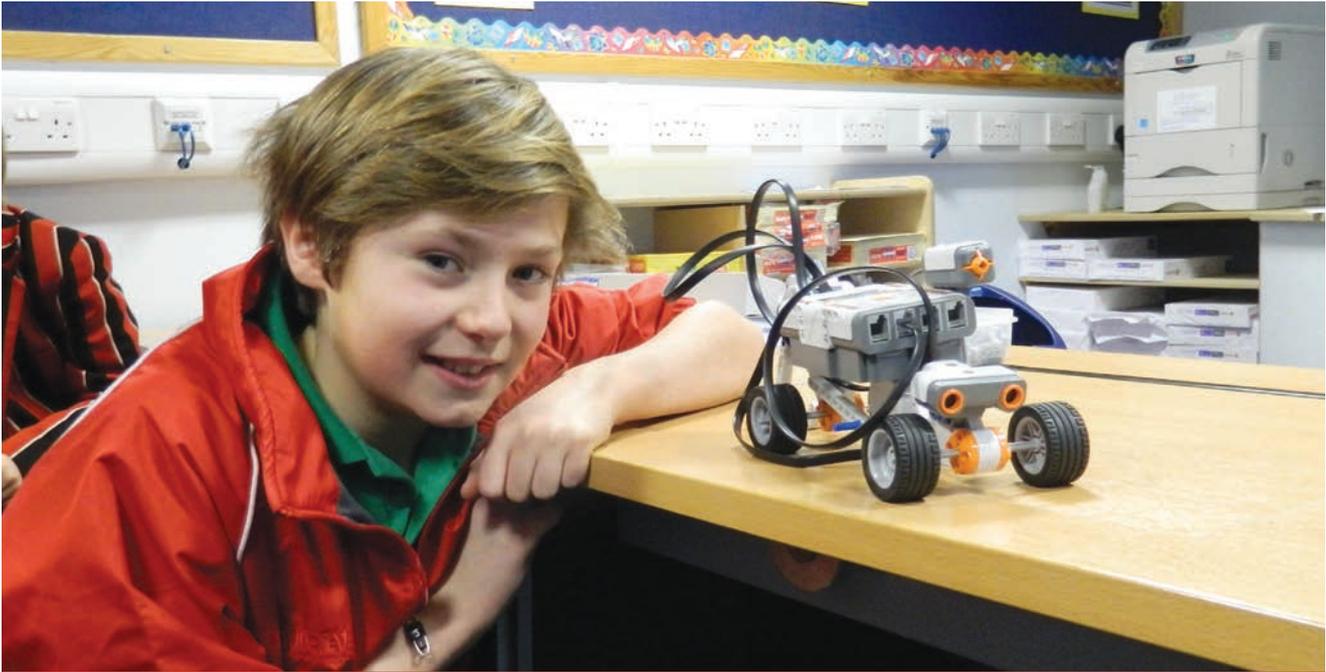
By the time St Faith's children leave the school at the end of Year 8, they will be proficient in programming in a



St Faith's views compsci as a key subject

modern language called Python which is used extensively by Google. The latest version, Python 3, can be downloaded free of charge. The children will have encountered important fields such as cryptography, web design, networking, logic gates, expert systems, and various number bases including binary, octal and hexadecimal. They will have had a taste of the future, having toyed with cutting-edge fields such as virtual reality, thought-control software, 3D graphics and artificial intelligence. In short, they will be ready to lead the country's 'millennium generation' of computer science professionals.

John Robson, digital and technology consultant whose children attend St Faith's school, commented: "A solid understanding of computer science has become a key life skill and is the passport to success in the modern workplace, particularly in areas like engineering, digital communications and entertainment. CompSci provides children with the opportunity to 'delve under the hood' of technology. Simply put – learning how something works is much more important than merely learning how to work it."



Computer science is proving to be cross-curricular

For St Faith's there is a balance to be struck between compsci and solid digital literacy skills though. Younger pupils in Years 1-4 study digital literacy, which teaches them how to operate computers and use software. St Faith's recognised the need for both disciplines as the country has already gone full circle in the last 25 years. Taught in schools in the 80s, computer science was scrapped by the Government to make way for ICT because young people were leaving school with a lack of basic digital literacy. This resulted in the UK losing its title as world leader in the software industry which has prompted the switch back. The new compromise of the two, bundled under the umbrella term computing will be an exciting subject.

For many years there has been a dearth of computer science materials but the looming curriculum re-write has triggered the emergence of some exciting new resources. For example, binary can be practised by the playing of an excellent online game at www.pwnict.co.uk called Binary Grid. There are many useful tools and lesson plans on code-it.co.uk, and the site csunplugged.org has free learning activities that teach the concepts of compsci without needing a computer!

Computer science is proving to be cross-curricular as demonstrated in a recent enrichment day at St Faith's. Year 7 pupils were challenged to design, build and program Lego Mindstorms robots to be entered into the seminal Robot Olympics competition later in the day.

Working in teams, the pupils designed their robots together on paper after appointing their Chief Designer who went on to complete the drawings. While the building sub-team constructed the robots from the blueprints, the programming sub-team wrote the code for the robot to successfully navigate the 25 metre race course, which featured a cone obstacle to negotiate.

In programming their robots, pupils had to decide whether to take a wide journey round the cone but end up travelling further, or to take a tighter route but risk disqualification if the cone wasn't cleared. They experimented with smooth curves around the cone as well as programming their robot to take rectangular routes.

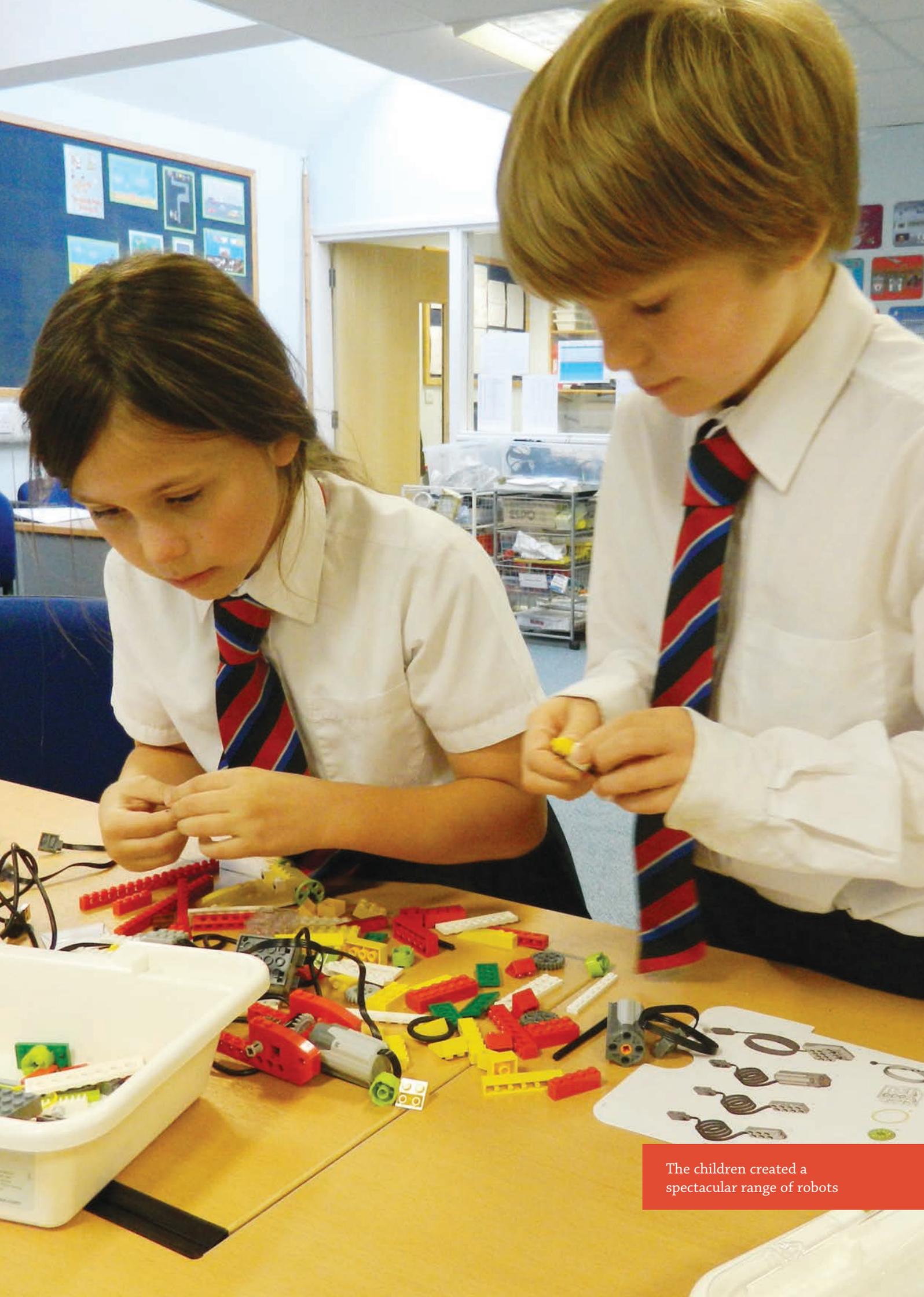
In the design stage the teams experimented to discover whether four wheels were faster than two and whether three wheels helped with turning corners. Pupils tested and modified their robots as they discovered what was required for stability versus how adding additional wheels slowed their robots down.

The children created a spectacular range of robots: some resembling Wall-E, others more like moon buggies with faces. The races involved four heats, followed by semi-finals and a final, and the three best teams were awarded with gold, silver and bronze medals.

The Robot Olympics caught the pupils' imagination and called on the teams to use their creative skills in the design and build stages as well as their logical thinking and problem solving skills when programming. Working in teams they used good communication and collaboration techniques to apply their classroom knowledge into action.

By the time the Government releases its revised national curriculum in 2014, St Faith's pupils will have a two-year head start on their compsci journey, and be well on their way to becoming the next Sir Tim 'www' Berners-Lees or Mark 'Facebook' Zuckerberg.

Mr Jamie Mitchell is head of digital learning at St Faith's, Cambridge. For further information and advice, he can be contacted on jmitchell@stfaiths.co.uk



The children created a spectacular range of robots

All the benefits, without the cost?

Hilary Moriarty, National Director of the Boarding Schools' Association and the State Boarding Schools' Association, shares a well-kept secret



Pupils at Cranbrook School in Kent, one of the leading state boarding schools

Once upon a time, a Head of a country boarding school was asked to address a gathering of London prep school parents on an evening when schools were exhibiting their wares and parents were scouting for the senior school for their offspring. Three London Heads spoke before her, extolling the virtues of their schools – the diversity, the academic programmes, the results – and they were all honest enough to admit the slight fly in the ointment: they were city schools, and their sporting facilities in those pre-Olympic

days were remote, sometimes far enough away to need buses to take students and staff to the pitches or the pools.

When the country boarding Head stood to speak, she threw away her prepared speech and said: 'My school is in the country, an hour from London. We have all the good things that my colleagues have spoken about, but we also have 200 acres, a swimming pool, six tennis courts, two lacrosse pitches and stabling for 60 horses. If you are interested

in that kind of education, as well as what happens in the classroom, come and talk to me.' And they did.

A colleague recently spent a hectic evening at a London prep school talking to parents about his school as a possible destination for their children, about to move on to their secondary education. There were no formal presentations, so his was just one stand among many, with London day schools vying for position and parental interest with boarding schools from all over the country. All displayed splendid pictures of their schools, tables of their results, prospectuses and carrier bags on offer, and sometimes pens and even chocolates. Anything to bring the customer to their stall and give them a chance to talk about what was really wonderful about their school and why it would suit their every need in a senior school.

My colleague is Headmaster of a boarding school within reasonable reach of London, and therefore of interest to many parents, perhaps worried about the entry requirements for the prestigious London day schools, perhaps interested in a country alternative to city schooling. Obviously, parents interested in a boarding education at all would be interested in how much it would cost.

Most parents who asked were astonished to hear that boarding at the lovely school – another one with 200 acres and horses – was actually less expensive than some London day prep schools. For a boarder? How could this be?

It could because the school is a state boarding school, and the fee is just for boarding. In a state school, education is free, so parents are not charged for it. The fee for a place as a boarder in a state boarding school is therefore roughly half the fee for a boarding place at an independent school.

The important point is that these schools provide a quality education, and a quality boarding experience, available in some of the best schools in the country.

There are 37 state boarding schools, scattered all over the country, as far into glorious countryside as Cumbria, Devon, Somerset and Norfolk. As many as 23 are now academies, nine of them are grammar schools, with the usual selective entry requirements at age 11 (or in the case of Cranbrook in Kent, 13). The rest are non-selective, and bound by the Admissions Code to truly be non-selective. A state boarding school will expect to interview a prospective student to assess if the young person is suitable to board, but that may not turn into covert selection. One of them, Hockerill Anglo-European College in Bishops Stortford, is proud of its pro-European stance which means it has only ever offered the International Baccalaureate as its leaving exam, and its students are sufficiently fluent to be able to have some humanities classes in Years 7-9 conducted entirely in French or German. No wonder the school was named as IB School of the Year by the *Sunday Times* two years ago.

Three of the schools opened to boarders only two years ago, having persuaded the last government to back their ambitions to add a boarding house to the range of options they had available to students. State of the art boarding houses were built at The Priory LSST Academy

near Lincoln, at Harefield Academy in Enfield and at The Wellington Academy in Wiltshire.

Standards of care in 21st Century boarding schools have never been higher, and this is true of state boarding schools as much as it is of their independent counterparts. The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools were introduced in 2002 and set the benchmark for good practice throughout the sector. Responsibility for the inspection of boarding passed through several agencies until finally coming to rest with Ofsted. Since 2001 they have inspected state boarding schools' provision of boarding and their published reports – on the Ofsted website and on the schools' own websites – are a useful guide to the detail of how a school is performing in this vital area of their students' lives.

The National Standards were revised in 2010 but still form the backbone of expectations of any boarding school.

Meanwhile, parental expectations of all boarding schools have changed dramatically in recent years. Gone are the days of dormitories like barracks, with – if you were lucky – flimsy curtains dividing the serried ranks of iron bedsteads. Gone are freezing open-air swimming pools and compulsory early morning runs as punishment for infringement of trivial rules. Gone is the poor food and the frosty reception for nosey parents. Gone is the solitary phone box on a boarding floor, with children queuing to call home. Come to think of it, in an era when every child is likely to have a phone and parents and children are in regular, casual email contact, the letters home may well be gone also – and that, perhaps is a pity, even if they were censored in olden times.

Boarding schools today are far more open places, with most parents living no more than an hour away, and readily available for performances and matches ('If you're in the team, I'll be on the touch line'). There really is a partnership between parents and school with the best interests of the child always at the heart of what is going on. Much of the change is a result of the standards and the inspection regime, yes, but much of it also is a consequence of the modern realisation that a happy child is more likely to be a successful child, in all manner of ways – academically, socially, musically. And no child does well on dreadful food. The food has to be beyond good and up in the 'great' category, or the complaints will clog up your day and make you fire the chef.

There is no doubt that boarding will not suit every child. But for the right child, in the right school, it can be life-enhancing, life-expanding, life-changing. It has been said that a good education is the fortune a child cannot spend. It's reassuring to know that you don't have to spend a fortune to get it.

Hilary Moriarty is National Director of the Boarding Schools' Association and the State Boarding Schools' Association

The story of tree-to-heat

Schools are learning the lessons of sustainability – and saving thousands of pounds in the process

Something big is stirring down in the woodshed ... something with the potential to transform the energy policy of your school, save a big slice of your energy costs and provide a hands-on resource for teaching sustainability to pupils.

A growing number of schools across the South East are reducing their reliance on fossil fuels in favour of biomass renewable energy, a more sustainable source of heating and power produced from woodchips or pellets.

The growth is thought to be fuelled, in part, by the Government's Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), which was introduced last year to encourage the uptake of renewable heat technologies among communities and businesses. This scheme provides financial incentives to eligible, non-domestic renewable heat generators for the life of the installation or up to a maximum of 20 years.

Mark Lebus, managing director of LC Energy, a biomass provider, said: "As heat in schools must be available on-demand, particularly during cold spells such as the UK has experienced recently, locally-sourced biomass has proved an excellent option, especially with the availability of the RHI. We've seen a significant increase in the number of schools recognising the cost effectiveness of wood fuel energy, as well as the benefits it delivers in terms of reducing the carbon footprint and lessening the establishment's reliance on fossil fuels."

Cost savings using the wood biomass products are significant. A domestic home requiring 15,000kWhrs of heat per year, for example, would need to spend £2,250 if run on electricity; £945 a year if run on oil and £720 on mains gas. This compares to £675 per year for wood pellets and £530 for woodchips. Scale up the operation and savings can run into thousands of pounds per annum.

Ready-made educational tool

Julie Davies, office manager, at Marston Vale Middle School in Bedfordshire, says: "Our biomass system has proved a very cost effective alternative to our previous oil central heating system. Estimates suggest we've reduced our spending on heating by £15,000 a year. Over time, we will also benefit from the Government's Renewable

Heat Incentive and this could save us an additional £15,000, annually. As well as using these savings to make investments in other areas of the school, our teachers have also gained a ready-made educational tool to help children understand the long term value of renewable energy."

Also looking forward to considerable savings while promoting sustainability is Paul Harris, estate and facilities manager at Highfield and Brookham Schools in Liphook, Hampshire that require a huge 1.3m kWh per annum. "Last year we spent around £98,000 on oil which we now will not need, so this will be a direct and instant saving. We are also applying for the RHI scheme which should give us approximately £50,000 per annum index linked for the next 20 years."

Incentive payments are linked to the amount of renewable heat generated and even small-scale users will generate at least – and often more than – the cost of the wood chip or wood pellet fuel each year in incentive payments. Initially, the school is buying in the woodchip needed to fire the boilers but they are fortunate enough to have extensive woodlands on site and plan to use this to source their own woodchip, becoming ultimately self-sufficient.

They too are fully exploiting the educational opportunities, as Paul explains: "We'll be using the biomass process within the school curriculum and will have all of the children visiting the building. We're already introducing it into aspects of the children's projects and focusing the children on renewables within the curriculum."

In addition to biomass, the estate has installed a number of other sustainable technology systems including solar thermal, solar PV, ground source heat and air source heat systems.

Using a biomass system means installing an entirely new plant. While the cost is subsidised by government incentives, the switch can be achieved with minimal disruption to education. At Highfield and Brookham Schools, work began last summer when the district heat pipes were installed and the boiler and chip storage building were erected during the long break.

Over the autumn, the boilers and the interfaces around the school were installed and the system was up and running

before the Christmas break. Removal of the existing boilers and installation of the new heat exchangers was carried out during school holidays to minimise disruption. The final two heat interfaces were put in place over the Easter break when the school was able to complete their application and apply for the RHI support.

The 'carbon neutral' solution

The production of biomass energy is considered to be a sustainable process as trees take carbon out of the atmosphere as they grow, and return it as they are burned. Managed on a sustainable basis, biomass can be harvested as part of a constantly replenished crop, usually by woodland management or coppicing, or as part of a continuous programme of replanting. The new growth takes up CO₂ from the atmosphere and the combustion of the previous harvest releases it. This maintains a closed carbon cycle with no net increase in atmospheric CO₂ levels, sometimes referred to as 'carbon neutral'.

Further savings in CO₂ are made when biomass is used as an alternative to a fossil fuel. Savings depend on the fuel being displaced, but these can be very significant. If the net CO₂ emissions are calculated over the life cycle of a fuel,

then electricity produces a massive 530kg/MWh; oil gives 350kg/MWh and natural gas releases 270kg/MWh. Wood produces just 7kg/MWh.

Mark Smith, assistant head at St James Primary School in Elstead, Surrey, was an early convert to the carbon neutral biomass solution. His school has had a biomass boiler since August 2010. He says: "After exploring a range of heating possibilities for the school, we opted for biomass, given its excellent sustainability profile and cost effectiveness. It was also compelling for us to select an energy option which allows us to use a locally sourced fuel supply – not only does this help to minimise our carbon footprint, but it also allows us to support industry within our local community."

LC Energy has established a tradition of working with schools to further the understanding of biomass and develop the educational opportunities around the process. James Little, LC Energy's business development manager explains: "We work with schools to help illustrate the whole tree-to-heat story to pupils. The children always find it engaging to have a hands-on approach to learning about energy production and giving them a Norway Spruce to plant at home really gets them involved – nothing like a spot of competitive tree growing to get the creative juices flowing."



The biomass system at Highfield and Bookham Schools

An isolated house

Jan Miller, head of art at Moreton Hall, explains how an isolated house becomes an invaluable resource when bridging the transition from junior to senior departments in a girls boarding school

Year 6 girls from Moreton Hall School departed for a weekend in a remote house in Snowdonia led by the Junior Headteacher. The large house is owned by a local school and is used by many groups who wish to escape the pressures of daily school life. The benefits of such a weekend are limitless. The experience is invaluable for strengthening the relationships between pupils and with their teachers, and in extending learning in several curriculum areas.

There were two aims for the weekend. Firstly, to spend time away from the distractions of computers and

television; taking time out in a quiet, rural setting to enjoy reading, sharing poetry, story writing and using the landscape as inspiration for creating art. The second aim was to provide an opportunity for Year 6 to spend time with Year 7 in a relaxed, informal setting prior to joining the senior school where many will also become boarders.

The minibus was loaded with sleeping bags, cooler boxes of food, a fruit crate of board games and books, girls' homemade cakes and every conceivable pattern of welly boot! The school, set in 100 acres, provides ample opportunity for outdoor learning in forest school,



The aim was to spend time away from the distraction of computers and television



The school provides ample opportunity for outdoor learning

performances in the amphitheatre and teaching outside of the classroom, but we wanted to give pupils the opportunity to steer their own learning.

On the journey, pupils rehearsed songs for their school play as they noticed the roads getting narrower, heading deep into the forestry commission land. The house stood alone in a valley and was the epitome of idyllic isolation.

Their well-worn teddies marked their chosen beds before donning wellies and waterproofs and setting off to explore. An hour later, their wet muddy clothes were hung on their makeshift washing line across two trees. They allocated jobs to cut wood, raid the coal bunker and built a fire while others made big mugs of hot chocolate. They appeared at home with their big silly animal slippers on, toasted marshmallows on metre-long striped sticks whilst their dripping socks dried over the fire. They worked their way through a stack of books, including ones from an author after her school visit, and played word games, perfect while there was a sun shower. The girls appreciated the downtime to curl up in the window seat engrossed in their books. Exciting and creative writing activities were not seen as

a chore and were followed by literature based games and activities. Scrabble with a head of English brings out the best seven-letter words, even if while we engrossed, her wet Labrador managed to steal the best place in front of the fire.

And then out again, in spare clothes, to feed the horses in the nearby field and take baskets to forage for things to collect for their still life drawings. This time, the girls took pencils and notebooks outside to brainstorm the difference in the lives of us and of the people who would have lived in the cottage one hundred years ago. Their day-to-day lives using water, growing food, shopping, school, jobs were all given consideration. Girls built an outside fire and developed individual story beginnings, which were shared as they devoured giant bowls of pasta that they cooked. Girls with the most untidy bedrooms were awarded dish-washing duty.

The house was certainly basic with no home comforts – it had only recently had its earth floor replaced! Nobody seemed to notice there was no TV, no tuck shop for essentials, and they were living out of a bag. Nobody said they were bored, homesick – they were too busy.

Creative curriculum

The art teacher arrived and pulled out the tables onto the terrace. Girls were eager to capture the inspiring landscape and rolled out metres of brown parcel paper. They armed themselves with pens, charcoal we found from the fire of the previous occupants, mugs of ink and anything we could find to add to the texture. They held the paper down with fallen roof slates and wellies, with rain adding to the texture of the paper and effects of the ink. (Heavier rain, reluctantly, sent them inside to the laundry room to work.) They were inspired by the colours and light in the work of local artists who capture this landscape with every colour in their palette.

The geography teacher and housemistress of the boarding house led them, armed with OS maps and compasses, on an exploration of the terrain to identify erosion, soil types and river flow.

The Year 7 girls arrived with sketchbooks and cameras and explored the hills, even before bags were unpacked. They gathered back to show each other their sketches and notes and curled up under blankets to use their pocket watercolours, while Year 6 played football with the bus driver!

Both year groups came together to write poetry and read short historic children's stories. By candle and torch light they sang word games, while the generator was topping up. Girls took it in turns to maintain the fire for heat, light

and as an efficient drying tool with the night ending with sleeping bag dominoes in the dorms.

Adventures continued the next day before the minibuses collected us. Exhausted, they headed back to the boarding house, ready for a bath, clean clothes and their fix of technology – TV, games, phones, the internet and music. They didn't miss it, but they were glad they could send texts again, even if only to the girl in the next bed.

Girls put together an exhibition of their art in the school hall supported by their photos, diaries and stories, and used their work as a springboard for more substantial work. Drawings were developed into large-scale paintings, incorporating site drawings from the older school buildings that brimmed with age and architectural character – from the walled garden to the potting sheds.

This was no PGL adventure holiday. Skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving skills were built on. The girls were particularly proud of developing inventive methods of squeezing the most water from their socks and crafting a clothes drying spit in front of the log burner to rotate their socks. It was an ideal setting for friendships to flourish and our mission was accomplished: strong links were developed between the two parts of the school where often there appears to a gap and the girls flourished in their life away from home.



“This was no PGL holiday ...”



Photographer of the Year 2013

Here are the details of how to enter the 2013 *Prep School* Photographer of the Year competition.

Entries must be received by May 31st, 2013, and the winning photographs will be published in the September 2013 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 CD-ROM 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 2013

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 2013, John Catt Educational Ltd, 12 Deben Mill Business Centre, Old Maltings Approach, Melton, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1BL.
 Or email to editor@prepschoolmag.co.uk

Bringing phonics to life

Phonics needn't be difficult to teach, says Emily Bullock

Phonics is an essential element of teaching and learning in an early years setting, but it can often raise a sigh and a groan (and not only from the children) because of its 'mechanical' approach. Children must learn to recognise the smallest parts of words (phonemes) but depending on the way the phonemes are taught, teaching and learning can become quite laborious. This does not need to be the case. By using a multi-sensory approach both children and adults can find phonics teaching and learning more engaging.

Many schools and early years settings follow a phonics programme that is usually fairly well balanced and structured. However, it is important to remember when teaching phonics that the sessions should be varied in terms of delivery and activities. Don't be afraid to dip into different programmes or mix a programme with your own ideas. By being creative and sampling different approaches, you can bring phonics to life.

The beauty of an early years setting is that you generally have access to an outdoor area or role play area away from the carpet or classroom. This gives an invaluable opportunity to differentiate phonic sessions. I have found it effective to teach phonics to two groups; I teach one group while a teaching assistant takes the other group outside for free play or other activities. This has meant that with one group moving at a slower pace I am able to differentiate effectively and focus more on the individual needs of the children in each group.

There should be a clear structure to phonics sessions and a key point to note is that phonics must be taught regularly and systematically. However, that does not mean it does not have to be fun. Here are 20 practical ways to inspire you to teach phonics with a more multi-sensory approach in an early years setting.

1. Instead of getting the children to use their whiteboards, ask them to write in the air with their fingers, use paint or write letters/phonemes/words in sand, glitter, rice, glittery flour.
2. All children enjoy a bit of competition so split the children into teams and set challenges. For example, which team can write the most 'ch' words in two minutes?
3. Play a game of noughts and crosses using words concentrating on the sound focus, *eg* all words that contain the 'ck' sound. The children are split into noughts and crosses teams. You set up a three-by-three grid on the whiteboard with 'ck' words in each box. They come forward and choose a word and read it aloud. If they get right then they put a nought/cross over the word. The winning team gets three in a row.
4. Sensory display: make a variety of phonemes you are learning using tactile materials such as sandpaper, bubble wrap, cotton wool, sequined material, *etc.* Put them onto a display and encourage children to feel the display and say the sounds. You may even like to blindfold them and make it a challenge.
5. Songs and actions are a brilliant way to get the children moving and engaging with sounds.
6. There are a number of websites that can enhance phonics teaching and learning. Here are a couple I have found particularly useful: www.phonicsplay.co.uk; www.ictgames.com
7. Play dough is a great tactile resource for encouraging children to become familiar with sounds. Play dough mats, making objects that have particular initial sounds, making the actual phonemes are all great ways to help children visualise sounds.

By moving away from whole-word teaching to phonics, reading in young children has improved exponentially

8. Interactive whiteboards are a great tool. I have found it helpful to play games that I have made. One of my favourites is the sound swat. I have a flipchart page of flies with different sounds on their wings. The children hold fly swats and I ask them to help me to swat the sounds in some words. For example, the flies might have 'sh', 'ch', 'wh' and 'th' on their wings. I then ask, "Can you swat the correct phoneme fly for the word 'shop'?"
 9. Rather than writing on whiteboards, you can use magnetic letters on mini whiteboards.
 10. Buried treasure: hide magnetic letters or laminated letter cards in the sand or coloured water and send the children on a timed hunt to find different sounds. This activity can also be used for children who are more advanced, ask these children to collect the sounds to spell a particular word.
 11. Sound bags: fill a feely bag with objects all starting with, or containing the same, phoneme. Pass the bag around a circle asking children to choose objects and say aloud what they are and then identify the focus phoneme. You could extend this by encouraging the children to try to write some of the words.
 12. Picture sorting: using hoops, ask the children to sort pictures of things beginning with or containing different sounds. For example, some pictures may have a 'sh' focus (shop, ship, shark shape), some a 'ch' focus (chocolate, church, chimp, chip). The children then need to put the images into the correct hoops.
 13. Run to: display a variety of sounds you are learning around the room. Say a phoneme or word containing a phoneme and ask the children to run to where the phoneme is displayed in the classroom.
 14. Art: allow the children to choose what they would like to paint, sculpt or draw with the same sound focus and put the work on a display.
 15. Sorting: set up a series of phoneme trays and ask the children to put objects onto the correct trays. You could even leave this as an interactive display and encourage the children to add things to the correct trays as they identify objects.
 16. Phonics relay races: put the children into small teams and lay a whiteboard on the floor away from each team. Tell the children the phoneme you would like them to focus on and then they have to run to the whiteboard one at a time to write a word containing the focus phoneme. Time the children and when the time is up, count the words. Whichever team has written the most words wins.
 17. Collage: set up a display board for the children with the phoneme you are focusing on in the centre. Ask the children to use magazines, print out pictures, or draw different objects and encourage the children to add pictures to the working display as you teach a phoneme.
 18. Phoneme race: students are put into two teams and each team has a bucket. The students run to a hula hoop and find phonemes that are lying inside it. The teacher will give clues for which phoneme the children at the beginning of the line need to find in the hula hoop. For example: "The phoneme you need to find is at the beginning of the word 'fish.'" The student will run to the hula hoop, find the correct phoneme, and put it in their bucket. The team or teams that have all the correct letters in their bucket are the winners.
 19. Phoneme chants: use song and rhyme to help the children remember their sounds. This website has a few ideas to get you started: http://www.auburn.edu/academic/education/reading_genie/chants.html
 20. Another problem to be aware of when teaching phonics are non-phonetically plausible words. The English language is not consistently written in a phonetically plausible way. Non-phonetically plausible words are a real hurdle when it comes to teaching children to read. You explain to the children that these are the phonemes they need to know, that they should use them to help when trying to read tricky words, but then have to explain that the roles do not apply to these words because they are different. Very confusing! Many programmes have names for these words and a strategy for teaching them so that the children know them when they come across them in reading or writing. Unlike other phonics instruction, this can require some rote teaching so to enhance this, here are a few ideas.
 - Bingo
 - Spelling games
 - Word hunts
 - Word of the day
 - Highlight non-phonetically plausible words in a piece of text using the interactive whiteboard
 - Practise with a friend.
- By moving away from whole-word teaching to phonics, reading in young children has improved exponentially. Phonics is so important in early years teaching; it provides children with a tool to read most words independently without having to rely on memory. It also improves self-esteem as children are quickly able to read words applying sounds that they have learned. Remember these key points when teaching phonics.
- Phonics teaching should be: explicit; engaging; multi-sensory; and must give children an opportunity to apply what they have learned.
- Enjoy phonics; it is a pleasure to teach. Hopefully these strategies will raise enthusiasm for phonics in your setting.

Emily Bullock is a classroom teacher based in Hong Kong. She is currently teaching at Shatin Junior School

Enriching the National Curriculum for middle years students

The International Middle Years Curriculum takes up the challenge, says Anne Keeling

Achieving the requirements of the National Curriculum while, at the same time, providing students with an enriching learning experience, are difficult challenges for many schools. However, Harrow International School in Bangkok thinks it has found the answer with the International Middle Years Curriculum. This is a brand new curriculum that's based on the very latest scientific research and many years of learning-focused experience.

It's a curriculum that is actually addressing the learning requirements of young teenagers says Executive Headmaster and Chief Operations Officer of Harrow International Schools, Mark Hensman. "We all know that learning for students needs to be more relevant and enquiry-based," he says. "We also know that this applies in particular to the Key Stage 3 curriculum," he adds. "The recent emergence of the International Middle Years Curriculum has therefore been a breath of fresh air and a relief for those who have been looking for a middle years curriculum which builds on the National Curriculum but takes it much further," he continues. "For us in the Harrow International Schools, the International Middle Years Curriculum has been a great launching pad into 'big ideas' while remaining grounded in the National Curriculum."

So how does this curriculum provide an enriching learning experience yet, as Mark Hensman says, still stay grounded in the requirements of the National Curriculum?

Supporting a teenager's learning needs

The International Middle Years Curriculum (IMYC) is a curriculum that has been designed to meet the very specific learning and developmental needs of 11- to 14 year olds. The work that went in to creating the IMYC involved several years of research with teachers, headteachers,

children, parents, neuroscientists, psychologists and other experts of adolescents. It also drew on the experiences of its sister curriculum: the highly successful and rigorous International Primary Curriculum (IPC).

A crucial determining factor of the IMYC was one we all know, regardless of whether we're teachers, parents or scientists: that adolescence is a tricky time for many



Teenagers need to find relevance in what they are doing

students and adults to handle. One of the researchers whose work influenced the IMYC was Harry Chugani, a neurologist at Wayne State University in Detroit who sums up the state of many students during their middle years: “Adolescence is a time when brains are absorbing a huge amount, but also undergoing so many alterations that many things can go wrong,” he says. “The teenage years rival the terrible twos as a time of general brain discombobulation (confusion, embarrassment).”

Meeting the needs of the brain’s fine tuning

It is this ‘fine tuning’ of the brain that influences how 11- to 14-year-olds respond to the way they learn and the way they are taught. The very specific needs caused by this fine tuning are addressed and supported in the IMYC. By meeting these needs, the curriculum creates an enriching learning experience for students. For example, teenagers need to be able to make decisions for themselves but they require support to achieve this and help to organise their thinking. Therefore, the IMYC provides a clear, stable process of learning that is common to every unit of work. Teenagers need to find relevance in what they are doing and so the IMYC delivers discrete subject learning all connected to one common, conceptual theme. Teenagers need to make sense of who they are. So the IMYC encourages learning that helps them to make connections, not only between the subjects they study but also to their own lives and to express their learning through current media platforms that they find inspiring and engaging. Teenagers need to take action and are willing to face significant risks in order to achieve a goal, so the IMYC involves active, challenging, skills-based learning. Teenagers need their peers as a result of the transition in their brains and bodies from child to adult and so the IMYC encourages collaborative learning and peer assessment. Teenagers need empathy, advocacy support and structures in order to become able, independent and interdependent individuals. So the IMYC promotes self-reflection and expression and incorporates personal and international learning into every unit too.

It is this detailed focus on the specific needs of a middle years student that is giving Harrow International a learning experience that, as Mark Hensman says, goes beyond the National Curriculum.

Learning with the IMYC at Harrow International

The school trialled the IMYC earlier this year and, based on the impact it had on both the students and the teachers, introduced it across the middle years this autumn. “It’s great to see the changes that are happening which are improving student learning,” says Harrow teacher Charlotte Flook who has been involved with the introduction of the IMYC from day one. “The departments are now all thinking about learning from the children’s perspectives. In the past we had not really connected our subject learning. Now, with the IMYC, we connect all the



“It is helping them to take responsibility”

learning and we tailor the learning so that it is culturally relevant to the children.”

Charlotte says the changes are impacting the pedagogy. “We are already feeling the positive results of the IMYC in the classroom,” she explains. “As teachers, we’re spending less time standing at the front talking to everyone. Now, because of the collaborative, inquiry-based approach to the learning, we’re going round to small groups tailoring the learning to the students’ needs.”

The students are, without doubt, enjoying and gaining from the enquiry-based approach of the IMYC says Charlotte. “It is helping them to take responsibility for their learning,” she says. “It took a bit of time for them to get used to this way of learning, rather than simply being told by the teacher. But they’ve really taken on this responsibility well and, as they see how much learning their friends and classmates are doing, so this encourages them to stretch their own learning more. It’s really positive collaborative learning and all the students are enjoying it.”

What it’s all about

The International Middle Years Curriculum uses an abstract, conceptual theme that, for six weeks challenges young teenagers to think about its meaning and



When people work together they can achieve a common goal

connection through each subject as well as through personal dispositions. This is known as the big idea. In the IMYC Balance unit for example, students' learning is all based around the big idea that 'things are more stable when different elements are in the correct or best possible proportions,' and in the IMYC Collaboration unit, learning follows the big idea that 'when people work together they can achieve a common goal'. "The big idea gives a shared definition for us all to connect to, so that we're all learning around exactly the same thing," explains Charlotte. "It is the heart of the IMYC and helps children to connect all their learning in the most effective way possible."

Over the course of a unit, students are encouraged to reflect on the big idea through keeping a journal. This also helps them to develop their understanding of how the big idea relates to them personally and to the world around them. At the end of the six weeks of subject learning, students collaborate to produce a media project (such as a podcast or YouTube video) as a medium to present their personal understanding of the big idea. And it's not just at this stage in the unit that IT is an integral part of the learning. Creating a journal often takes the form of blogging, and learning tasks incorporate many ways to research and record. "We're now really pushing technology within subject learning which we'd not used so much before," says Charlotte. "So the students are using iPads

and computers as part of their learning which has been a very positive learning experience," she adds.

Making the difference

One inspiring comment from recent research into adolescents comes from psychologist Abigail Baird who says: "Greater experience, together with an improved system for organising and retrieving the memories of that experience, enable the adolescent to recall and apply a greater number of experiences to new situations. Those who fare best during adolescence will be those who are able to integrate their abstract knowledge, past experiences and current situational demands." The International Middle Years Curriculum, with its learning approach designed to complement the needs of the adolescent brain, may actually enable students to do just that. Harrow International believes it already is.

Enriching the learning

For one of their six week units of work with the IMYC, students at Harrow International followed the Balance big idea that 'things are more stable when different elements are in the correct or best possible proportions'.

The students kicked off the unit by collaborating to use materials in the best possible proportion to create a raft that would float. This involved the use of many personal skills as well as some subject skills and knowledge too.

In history, the students looked at a range of sources by historians to explore whether accounts of people in the past were balanced and in proportion according to different perspectives.

In language arts, students changed elements of a story to investigate how they would affect the plot, setting and characters in a piece of writing.

In geography, they explored the needs of communities and considered how the proportions of resources support or challenge a community.

In science, they researched how living things are affected by the varying proportion of changes or imbalances in their environments.

In international mindedness, students discussed how one respects one's own cultural beliefs and perspectives while understanding those of others.

Other subject learning and dispositions relating to the big idea were studied too. Journal keeping throughout the unit helped students to prepare their own understanding of the big idea which they represented in their media projects to end the unit.

For more information about the IMYC or to talk with a school already using the IMYC contact Fieldwork Education at +44(0)20 7531 9696 or visit www.greatlearning.com/imyc

More ideas from the IMYC Balance unit and details of the full range of enriching and rigorous units are available at www.greatlearning.com/imyc

Jet plane crashes at school in quiet Staffordshire village – again!

Samantha Kirwan on a dramatic event that just keeps happening

You thought you would have heard about this major airline accident that happens every two years in the Staffordshire village of Brewood. It's the most anticipated day of the school academic year for the Year 6 pupils in the Preparatory Department and the Year 7 students in the Senior School at St Dominic's High School for Girls. The staff involved quite look forward to it too!

This independent school for pre-prep boys and girls, and the preparatory and senior departments for girls only, suspends the timetable for the day for its Year 6 and 7 pupils once a term, six days in total over a two-year cycle, to hold a series of Skills Days. The Skills Days are an opportunity to enhance the education given to the students; they allow the curriculum to be delivered creatively and the skills of the pupils to be developed. After initial discussions with staff and the girls themselves, St Dominic's High School for Girls wanted the pupils to become reflective learners, self-managers, creative thinkers, independent enquirers, team workers and effective participators. The Skills Days aim to develop the pupils in these areas and more.

The passenger jet plane crash forms part of the teamwork Skills Day. This was the first Skills Day that the pupils

participated in; it really launched the project and gave the girls a taste of future sessions. They are met at school with a scenario similar to the set of the hit USA drama, *Lost*, with 'debris' from a plane crash scattered across the extensive school playing fields. Days before, the academic staff involved and the maintenance staff can be seen squirreling away recycling, wood, old furniture or anything that slightly resembles the fuselage of a Boeing 747. For the pupils, what they discover on that day is a far cry from the everyday items that are on the school field – a passenger jet plane has actually crashed where they play, take their lessons and have physical education.

Ensuring their survival

Once they have assessed the situation the pupils have to work as a team to overcome a series of scenarios. For each task they are given resources and a problem to solve in order to ensure their survival. They have to work together to most effectively use their resources to: build a watertight shelter, manage conflict, remove dangerous waste material and deal with an unexpected emergency. The shelters are a sight to behold with ensuite facilities a must and all the latest technology accounted for. On the day, pupils are

They are met at school with a scenario similar to the set of the hit USA drama, *Lost*, with debris' from a plane crash scattered across the extensive school playing fields

Skills

taught basic first aid to deal with the situation. They spend their whole day outdoors, using the school's facilities.

During the plane crash scenario the pupils are given opportunities to learn how to prioritise and negotiate by selecting certain supplies during the wreckage game. They learnt how to explain decisions made, listen to alternatives, negotiate solutions and develop skills in creating practical solutions whilst building a shelter. By transporting an injured member of their team they are able to think through a problem, predicting outcomes, testing scenarios and working to deadlines. Throughout the day the girls develop skills in taking responsibility for a whole group, ensuring the group's success in given tasks.

Fairness and consideration

As team workers they have to reach agreements together and manage decisions. They have to show fairness and consideration to others but also take responsibility, showing confidence in themselves and in their own contributions. They successfully collaborate with others to reach common goals. At the end of the day they have the opportunity to reflect upon the decisions they have

made and what they would do if they were faced with the situation again. They will have time to consider themselves as team workers and how well their problem solving skills survived the day.

Parents are encouraged to take part and reflect upon the day with their child. In this case parents were advised to talk about different environments and what is needed in order to thrive in these areas. Parents were encouraged to get their children to consider their strengths as well as areas for development in terms of teamwork and what role they normally undertake in a team situation. It was proposed that parents might encourage participation in a team activity, such as a sport, drama group or choir.

Another highly anticipated Skills Day in the preparatory and senior departments at St Dominic's High School for Girls is the murder mystery and crime scene; they get to be Sherlock Holmes for a day and exercise their independent enquirer's skills. The pupils solve a crime using scientific experiments, deduction, group work and analysis of evidence. They record evidence reported to them and work in groups to solve the crime as roving reporters. In the science laboratories the students explore the world



As team workers they have to reach agreements together and manage decisions

of finger printing, use scientific methods to decide what time of day the crime took place, carry out fibre analysis and chromatography. Once they have compiled all their evidence they listen to key witnesses being interviewed. This is highly entertaining with staff dressed as the characters involved in the crime scene. They have to present their case to the reporters, answer any questions about their involvement in the crime, and plead their innocence as convincingly as they can. Finally, in groups the students create an evidence board that displays all of the findings they have compiled and illustrates how they have solved the crime. There is much excitement as the staff member that is the 'murderer' is revealed to them.

Creative thinking skills

The Skills Days provide opportunities to involve the local community and outside agencies. To develop creative thinking skills the students are asked to consider surviving with no money. The goal here is to encourage creative responses and to build awareness and empathy for the plight of the homeless, both in Britain and abroad. Using a selection of photos they discuss their thoughts about homeless people, and they write an honest description to accompany the photograph. Drama is involved as the girls take the role of a homeless person. To help them in this exercise, an employee of a homeless charity comes into the school to talk about the charity's work. The day closes with groups producing a fundraising campaign for a charity of their choice to appear in a national newspaper. Their campaigns are presented to the St Dominic's High School for Girls' charity committee for feedback. One of the charities is then selected by the committee, and a whole-school charity event organised to raise money for that charity.

The pupils' learning is especially enhanced when they have a Skills Day dedicated to establishing study skills and revision strategies. This day is timed to fall just before the examination period and develops the self-manager within each child. The pupils are presented with four untidy rooms. (This may not be unusual for some of them!) In groups they have to organise these spaces into effective study areas. They then devise a set of ten rules for an effective study space. The best ideas are transformed into a poster and displayed around school. The girls are then introduced to the learning styles: auditory, visual and kinaesthetic. They complete a written



Pupils solve a crime using scientific experiments

exercise to determine their preferred learning style. The girls then complete a series of practical activities, for example listening to an extract from a novel and answering verbal questions, to discover whether this is actually their preferred learning style or if other styles help. The teacher then takes them through an exercise of breaking down a text and introduces them to approaches connected with each learning style and asks them to think of any others. In their preferred learning style groups they then have a competition: who can create a resource to help people learn the most amount of information. Finally the pupils have time to plan a revision timetable for the next set of school examinations.

The Skills Days are constantly reviewed with new ideas and opportunities trialled with the pupils, some of which are their own suggestions and are developed from their own ideas and enthusiasms. The days reflect the pupils' interests and the current trends in the curriculum. The pupils thoroughly enjoy their experiences and they eagerly await the arrival of the school diary so they can find out the date of the next planned session is and what opportunities there will be for seeing their teachers in a different light!

Samantha Kirwan, Head of the Preparatory Department
at St Dominic's High School for Girls

The pupils' learning is especially enhanced when they have a Skills Day dedicated to establishing study skills and revision strategies

When Eggy Met Peggy

Puppet shows can be a useful way of helping children learn about themselves and the world around them, says Amy Lloyd-Jones

I discovered long ago that performance and puppetry provided the ideal platform for satisfying all my passions as visual artist, maker and storyteller. Aged five, with felt tips and kindling, I was producing short-lived and daring shows around (and *in*) our wood-burning stove. I like to think that this fearlessness continues in my work today.

My show, *When Eggy Met Peggy*, offers a feast of puppetry, laughter and a stomping soundtrack to inspire adults and children alike to grow their food, love it and eat it all up.

I have taken the show to some fantastic venues on its current tour, including the world-famous Little Angel Theatre in Islington; the Hay Festival of Literature and the Arts; Hull Truck Theatre; The Egg, at the Theatre Royal Bath; Cambridge Junction; and Oxford Playhouse. I also have future dates at Clifton High School, Bristol Grammar and Badminton School.

At the beginning of this year I had the pleasure of taking *When Eggy Met Peggy* to King Edward's Pre-Prep and Nursery School in Bath. I knew the pupils were having a good time, for my focus is primarily directed towards them, but it was fantastic to hear how the adults too have been engaged, for it should indeed be a shared experience between pupil and teacher. If they are being entertained and inspired together my contribution is much more likely to be used as a tool for further learning.

What is the show about? Like most parents I am often immersed in the weird and wonderful storylines and imagery found in fairy tales and nursery rhymes. They spark many ideas when producing a new show and I am always alert to what amuses and delights my own children.

I also find great joy in the fact that almost anything can be made into a puppet. Most recently this has included the food on my fussy sons' plates. Hours have been spent making fruit and vegetables talk their way into those stubborn little mouths.

Humpty Dumpty and *The Princess and the Pea* contain two delicious main characters and are ideal stars of a show that promotes enjoying your food. I giggled at the thought of a conversation between a big fat egg and a glamorous sparkling pea and was excited by the thought of cooking up an adventure for them.

With my brand of slightly-twisted humour, a big dollop of mischief and a refusal to talk down to children, I have turned the stories on their head, adding some rock 'n' roll and dancing on the way.

Eggy is a close relative to (but is most certainly not) Humpty Dumpty. The pea has much more to say than the princesses. Carrots, horses, raspberries and a talent competition: it has all been thrown in. I aim to intrigue my audience and, for this show, get them to know and love their dinner whilst having a good laugh.

As well as being a starting point for storytelling, creative writing and performance projects this show is great for inspiring prop-, set- and puppet-making: a wonderful tool for building practical manual skills, hand-eye coordination, focus and confidence.

Workshops, tailored to a school's requirements, are available. The benefits of having designed and made the puppets myself means I am well-placed to answer any questions the children might have about the construction process: they can't wait to have a look inside Eggy to see how I made his mouth work or how I have made the berries on the raspberry. Pupils often ask the most wonderful and often obscure questions not only of me but very directly to the different characters.

It is brilliant how they believe in the puppet even if the operator is still visible and I think this is partly because children experiment and project their imaginations and emotions onto toys (objects to be animated, or potential puppets) on a daily basis.

This is part of a process of learning about themselves and the world around them in their own homes and schools. Puppets are thus familiar, enchanting and part of their world. I am thrilled that this complicity in the magic extends to the adults in my audiences: one of *When Eggy Met Peggy's* first outings was in front of an all adult audience at a prototype evening at Bristol's Tobacco Factory.

To find out more, visit www.talulahswirls.co.uk





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“A reflection of our personality”

The UK lags behind the rest of Europe in teaching the use of fountain pens, says leading manufacturer Lamy

Spiky italic or grand curlicues can give an insight into our daily state of mind. Learning to write is an important part of our education, so it is imperative that we give our children the right tools. Writing should be an enjoyable activity, and not a laborious task, particularly in this age of ‘apps for everything’.

Fountain pen sales have increased year-on-year over the past decade, despite our growing dependence on e-mail, texting and the latest must-have gadgets. There is something special in receiving that heartfelt handwritten invitation or thank you letter that a spell-checked, robotically grammatical email simply cannot replicate. There is also some research to suggest that information that is written down by hand is more likely to be remembered.

Around the world, students approach learning to write in different ways. In America, Palmer cursive is taught as a matter of course, and despite seeming overly ‘decorative’ in Britain, it was designed with speed and physicality in mind. AN Palmer, the originator of the method, advocated what is known as ‘whole arm movement’. This is a way of creating script from the shoulder, rather than just relying on the hand and wrist. The belief was that this enabled people to write for longer and with more speed without cramping.

Of course, historically there was no other way to write something permanently than with a quill or dip pen, but there are plenty of contemporary authors who still choose to write their first draft using more traditional methods. Booker Prize nominated writer Philip Hensher has just released a book entitled *The Missing Ink: The Lost Art of Handwriting* which it is to be presumed was first written in longhand using a pen and paper. The author Christopher Paolini, whose *Eragon* trilogy is hugely successful states: ‘Fountain pens are best for writing large amounts by hand-less friction between nib and paper. Plus they look neat.’ It should be noted, however, that this brief missive was tweeted ...

Most countries in mainland Europe expect students to write with fountain pens from a younger age than

in Britain, and there is a general belief that they teach children better control over writing. In Germany for example, a ‘learning to write’ system is adopted; an approach shared by German pen maker Lamy. All of their student pens are designed with a patented ‘tri-grip’ system which trains the hand to hold the pen correctly, and to therefore write properly. Their system starts at pre-prep and prep school level with the ABC beginner’s pen, a solid maple fountain pen designed for small children’s hands, with a longer grip section providing support for the fingers to encourage writing with less pressure. The Lamy Nexx is a good alternative choice for those children who are more advanced in their development, or who are starting to write a little later using a fountain pen.

As children grow in confidence and develop their writing style, their requirements change. Homework and tests become more prevalent, and they have to write for longer periods, which is where the Lamy Safari range comes into its own. This range has become highly popular within the independent school network due to its range of funky colours, sturdiness and functionality. An archive article from *The Scotsman* illustrates the importance of writing in schools: the Head of Mary Erskine and Stewart’s Melville School banned the use of rollerball pens and pencils by pupils from Year 5 onwards, believing that ‘mastering stylish handwriting with a fountain pen raises academic performance and boosts self-esteem.’ There is also some evidence that repetitive strain injury is improved when switching to writing with a fountain pen from rollerball and gel pens.

Evolution dictates that if a species stops using a function, then that function eventually disappears. Fountain pens offer versatility; they can be customised, swapping lids and bodies, nibs can be changed to suit, and there is a great selection of coloured ink available. With the variety and quality of pens available, a fountain pen becomes distinctly ‘yours’, a small sign of individuality in an increasingly generic world.

A new association for private school proprietors

The Centre for Market Reform of Education shares a new initiative for proprietors

There is a popular misconception that schools run as businesses, be they proprietorially or corporately governed, must necessarily compromise educational outcomes in pursuit of profit. On the face of it, concerns voiced recently by Ofsted on the quality of teaching in non-association schools appear to validate that view.

Recent research by the Adam Smith Institute (ASI) into the impact of commercial ownership and management frameworks on educational outcomes makes clear that this belief is a myth. Looking at Ofsted 162A inspection outcomes on key teaching and learning-related criteria for all such schools inspected on this schedule between 2007 and 2010, the study found that 85 per cent of them consistently achieved 'good to outstanding' on these criteria. While this means that 15 per cent of those schools inspected during this inspection cycle (40 or so) could do better, to keep this in proportion, 30 per cent of non-association charitable trust schools were found wanting in the same period (amounting to more than 300 schools). There are of course many successful charitable schools, but among them are too many well-intentioned, but pedagogically misguided (often local community) enterprises.

It is evident that the private schools sector consistently attracts educationally committed investors – educationists who are prepared to invest heavily, both reputationally and financially, in securing high quality outcomes for their pupils. What challenges many of these schools, particularly those that are proprietor-owned and managed, is not the intelligence and ambition of their educational vision, but managing their businesses in a financially sustainable fashion within the framework of that overarching commitment. This is exactly the opposite of what is often asserted by opponents about the profit-making schools sector.

Research building on that undertaken by the ASI, by the Centre for Market Reform of Education (CMRE), presented in a keynote address by James Croft at its proprietorial



SCHOOL PROPRIETORS' ASSOCIATION

schools conference last April (2012) found that in comparison to ISC schools, the fees at privately-owned schools (of which only a third are currently in association) are quite clearly weighted towards the more affordable end of the spectrum, attracting a high proportion of 'first-time buyers.'

Taking the 2011 ISC census data for average junior day fees as a benchmark, and factoring in a generous increase of 5 per cent to estimate 2012 data, 82 per cent of the 430 private schools educating children at the junior school level do so on fees lower than this. The projected ISC figure for senior schools, again taking the 2011 figure as a starting point, was just short of £12,500, and 69 per cent of private schools came in under that benchmark.*

Having collated details of fee concessions from school websites, ISC online profiles, and the independent schools and boarding schools site schools site, CMRE researchers found that in addition to obviously commercial discounting (for siblings, new entrants, *etc*), which was widespread (with 62 per cent of institutions offering such concessions), a good number go above and beyond their remit as businesses to provide discretionary means-related bursaries as well as academic and other scholarships.

Private schools work hard to make the service they provide as accessible to as broad a profile of pupil as they can, within the constraints of the market. However given the structuring influence of state provision – most keenly

felt over the past decade in the rising cost of teacher salaries and regulatory compliance – it has become a real challenge to ensure sustainability. Lowering fees to attract and retain pupils must not jeopardise the financial stability of a school during cyclical downturns. It is to address this challenge, and to further the understanding of proprietorial models of private schooling, that a new association of school proprietors has been formed this year.

The School Proprietors' Association

The School Proprietors' Association (SPA) developed from a consultation hosted by CMRE to help proprietors explore the case for a new independent school association, itself following a successful conference initiative in this space by the Centre in April 2012 – an event designed to speak specifically to the interests and concerns of school owners and investors, business managers and heads working in this sector. Launched in January, the now independent SPA seeks to provide opportunities for networking and fellowship among private school owners and senior leadership, in order to facilitate the sharing of best practice, and access to relevant professional expertise and advice.

The SPA's inaugural Private Schools' Conference, which continues to be run on the SPA's behalf by the Centre, was held on Saturday 11 May 2013 at Great Houghton School, Northampton. It offered a unique opportunity for private school owners and managers to meet, share their experiences, and learn from the perspectives of leading practitioners and consultants.

Commenting on the launch of the new association, James Croft, Director of the Centre for Market Reform of Education, said: "This is a welcome development for the sector. Professional isolation is never a good thing. The opportunities for networking and the sharing of best practice will undoubtedly be of great benefit to proprietors, heads of private schools, and their business managers. Greater visibility and improved public understanding of the benefits of private ownership will serve both proprietors and their school communities well."

Fee information was obtained from school websites for 71 per cent of the 479 schools analysed; a further 10 per cent came from ISC online profiles; 18 per cent were extrapolated from Ofsted reports on the basis of a 5 per cent annual fee increase.

Using your management software effectively



Finton House share how 'School Manager' has helped transform the day-to-day running of the school

CJM Software was founded in 2004 by Jonathan Maiden and Chris Boulton to provide independent prep schools with a bespoke management information system. Through first-hand experience Jonathan and Chris strongly believe that no two schools are the same so any management information system (MIS) should fit around the school rather than the school adapting to the software.

Finton House, a London prep school, approached CJM Software in 2006 looking for a comprehensive management solution that was approachable by all staff. From its initial enquiry Finton House received individual attention to its particular needs backed up by CJM Software's extensive knowledge. Nothing was too big to ask or too small to

consider. The system could be tailored to the school right down to the terminology used. From a shortlist of four systems, School Manager was chosen for its simplicity, customisation and ability to deliver a quality, inclusive solution.

As with all schools, Finton House has a mixture of staff; some who welcomed new technology and some who were more reserved. The introduction of School Manager exceeded all expectations with even the most technophobic embracing the system with enthusiasm and understanding.

Over the last six years School Manager has transformed systems management at Finton House to create efficient daily registration and accurate pupil assessment,

evaluation and reporting. Learning support and staff administration have benefitted from greater control, whilst managing prospective pupils and leavers has become much simpler. The school diary has evolved into a proactive communication tool rather than just a record of events.

School Manager allows schools to select individual modules in addition to the core provisions including Sanctions and Rewards, Medical, Risk Assessment, Billing, Parent Portal and the exciting new Cover module.

The greatest benefit of School Manager has been the ability to track a pupil's progress from their first day at Finton House until their last. This has provided staff at Finton House with a complete overview of academic achievement and pastoral progress, all on one screen.

CJM Software delivers the highest level of customer service and personalised support. Finton House believes the approachability of CJM and the knowledge of the staff as to how the school works have been key to the success of School Manager. Help and support is always just a phone call away yet the impression is of someone sitting in the room next to them. School Manager has evolved with changes at the school so ongoing training and intuitive developments have been important in ensuring the system is as relevant today as it was six years ago.

Finton House introduced CJM to a revolutionary timetabling system they had been using for a number of years. CJM went on to develop this timetabling package into Tiger Timetabling: a powerful tool for building complex timetables. Tiger Timetabling combines clear features with powerful functions to provide a flexible, stress-free solution for even the most intricate timetables.

Staff, pupil, lesson and group data is imported directly from School Manager and this greatly reduces the time and effort needed to start the timetabling process. The automatic lesson positioning, and suggestions to optimise resources by moving existing lessons, help initial setups to run quickly and smoothly. Finton House can complete its timetabling in a few days. Tiger Timetabling has transformed the timetabling process from taking up to five people over four days, to being a single-person job.

For Finton House the intuitive 'drag and drop' interface makes performing ongoing changes easy. Tiger Timetabling handles conflicts and clashes efficiently whilst the ability to open multiple windows aids navigation and overall control. The flexibility to combine fixed position events

with floating start times and lengths has proved invaluable on many occasions.

Having used Tiger Timetabling for several years, Finton House now enjoys the simplicity of adapting its timetable for the next academic year. Timetabling has changed from being a daunting, stressful, endurance race to a much easier experience.

CJM Software through School Manager and Tiger Timetabling have made the systems management of Finton House much easier, quicker and more streamlined. Showing the software to other schools has drawn much praise and envy. We are very proud of what we have achieved with CJM Software and the relationship we have with the company.

Cai Murphy, School Administrator, Finton House

As the only software specifically designed for independent prep schools, School Manager provides a customisable platform to transform the running of a pre school of any size.

CJM Software has also developed Music School Manager (MSM): an award-winning management system designed specifically for music departments.

MSM can work independently as a stand-alone solution or can integrate into School Manager. The software eases the workload of busy music staff by pulling together a number of key areas into one solution to share information more efficiently. MSM can build a comprehensive record of all tuition, instrumental participation, group and solo performances, and exam results.

Sports Team Manager (STM) performs a similar function for busy sports departments. STM consolidates the management, recording and communication of sports teams and events. This customisable software, compatible with School Manager's Profiles module, records long-term individual performance data alongside a pupil's academic achievements.

STM organises all aspects of a team including adding match reports and results which can be emailed, printed or published to the school web site or parent portal.

For more information about CJM Software or its software solutions please email info@cjmssoftware.co.uk or telephone 01452 859624.

www.cjmssoftware.co.uk
www.fintonhouse.org.uk

When designing the icing, don't forget the cake!

Jan Evans, founder and owner of RSAdmissions, helps us consider how our schools can stand out from the crowd

Fifteen years ago when I took up my post as the first director of admissions and marketing at a leading girls' independent school, commercial marketers in our sector were like 'hen's teeth' – a pretty rare occurrence and slightly suspect at that.

To be honest, marketing a school then was a relatively simple job. In the succeeding decade the bar has been raised and competition has increased. Almost every independent school in the country has a slick website, a 'brand identity' and a plethora of attractive print pieces.

So these days, if you want to stand out from the crowd not only do you need to dare to be different (that's another article!) but your 'customer service' has to be top notch. If you get this bit wrong the rest is arguably icing without a cake.

To put it another way, however 'good' a school you are and however 'good' your marketing, it is the parent or prospective parent's first and lasting impressions that will drive your reputation in the market place.

Here are some of my experiences, bad and good (just a few of the 101 we discussed at the recent AMDIS/IAPS seminar), some of which, I hope, will make you think about what else you can do to ensure that your school puts its best foot forward. I have visited several hundred schools since I founded RSAdmissions in 2002. Here are some I will remember:

1. A famous school where the security guard stayed snugly in the corner of his little hut whilst we had a conversation from the stable door; or the school where a smiling gate keeper came out in the rain to speak to us, opened the barrier and let us in with a cheery wave.
2. The school whose website failed to tell me what kind of school I was looking at or where it was. It had wonderful pictures, but was it co-ed or single sex, prep or all-through?; or the school website where a click through to admissions takes you to a short video clip of the admissions registrar introducing herself (brilliant and comforting).
3. The school that had me listening to nine options on an

automated telephone system before discovering that admissions wasn't one of them (I thought schools were about people); or the school telephone answered by a human who asked if I would care to wait and whilst waiting I listened to the pupils singing an extract from a recent concert until the admissions office phone became available.

4. The school where a smiling receptionist offered both refreshments and the loo whilst guiding us to a comfortable room full of interesting artwork by pupils; or the school where we were tripping over boxes and joined a queue to speak to the lady behind the glass panel and then stood around in the hallway until collected.
5. The school where the visitors' car park was miles from reception (I noticed that the Head and bursar had parking places by the front door); or the school registrar who actually walked us to our car which was parked close to the entrance in a clearly marked space with our names on it.

Where would your school feature? And if you think you have got everything right, employ a mystery shopper: you may be surprised.

Finally, may I make a plea for training and support in customer care for those in the front line?

- When did your admissions staff last attend a course?
- Do they have the right tools to do their job?
- Are they clear what is expected of them and are they listened to?

And don't forget the secretaries, receptionists, house staff, kitchen and ground staff. How can they know what is best practice if they never get a chance to learn?

Jan Evans is founder and owner of RSAdmissions. The company supports over 100 schools using its market-leading admissions and marketing software and also specialises in customer care training including delivering the Certificate in Admissions Management Course for AMDIS



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Teacher training is more than a PlanBee for charity

Build Africa is an award-winning UK charity supporting children and their families living in poor rural areas of Uganda and Kenya focusing much of their work on primary school education. In 2012 Build Africa won the Charity Times 'International Charity of the Year' award' and starting this year, independent teacher resource website, PlanBee, started supporting three schools in rural Uganda through the charity.

Build Africa was founded in 1978 with local staff based in Kenya and Uganda working directly with communities to tackle poverty by improving the quality of primary education and providing opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. It employs a very holistic approach to school and community development that responds to a combination of needs such as safe drinking water, classroom and latrine construction, vital trainings in teaching, health and well-being, child rights and gender awareness, amongst others.

With Universal Primary Education introduced in Uganda in 1997 and re-introduced to Kenya in 2003, there was a huge surge in primary school enrolment but not a large enough investment into the education sector in order to meet the rising demand. The quality of teaching and learning therefore remained extremely low at rural schools with three out of four children not finishing primary school. Build Africa works closely with each school to ensure that it has well-trained teachers, effective management and governance, and high levels of parental involvement.

On average, 10% of teachers are paid for by parents at Build Africa partner schools, and these particular teachers have not received any professional training whatsoever; some teachers have only a few extra years of education under their belts compared to the pupils they are teaching. This vital teacher is helping to improve the skills of teachers at three Ugandan schools this year, resulting in a better education for over one thousand children.

"As an independent and growing teacher's resource website, the small team here at PlanBee was keen to support a charity that had direct involvement in teacher training," says Becky Waters, director and founder of PlanBee. "Starting my career as a primary school teacher, I can't imagine what a daunting task it must be for young people



to start teaching without any training. Build Africa is encouraging a sustainable model in the communities they work in and we count it a privileged to be able to support their on-going work."

Becky Waters stepped out of full-time teaching to set up PlanBee.com, a primary resource website for KS1 and KS2 which provides lesson plans, interactive slides and differentiated worksheets across a range of subjects. The teacher training and experience that she received here in the UK has been invaluable to the resources, which are all created from scratch. PlanBee's DT 'Homes', for example, is a great module to help children understand the diversity of other children's lives around the world and the geographical nature of the places they grow up. In supporting Build Africa, PlanBee hopes to draw attention to the ongoing needs of children, teachers and families in Uganda and Kenya.

For more information on Build Africa or to find out how your school can support their on-going work visit www.build-africa.org. For PlanBee teacher resources and further information on how you can start an individual or school account visit www.planbee.com.



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Dear Parents,

Well, all I can say is: what a term it has been! I for one am already looking forward to the summer holiday and having a break from your nagging and unrelenting moaning. Could I please remind you that I am merely flesh and blood and I cannot nip into a phone box and spin myself into a frenzy reappearing as Wonder Woman. Sadly I don't have her thighs. I cannot keep everyone happy and my latest ideas for change are proving as popular in their early stages as my last suggestions. However, in my quest to make our school the best it can be and also to appease the inspectors in the 'what has changed since the last inspection' box I have foolishly decided to press on.

Things reached a pinnacle of misery today as we cast our eyes over the budget for next year. Against the odds, however, the day was spectacularly saved in its dying minutes. In the current economy, where 'Every Child Matters', the news that two children were moving to our closest competitor, should have brought out the grim reaper from his slumber in the dark cupboard under the stairs where naughty gals used to be sent for picking their noses. However, the departure of the Gobymouth-Short family is a ray of sunshine in my dim and dull little life. They are proof that money can't buy you happiness, and if I had a tenner for every family now smiling at the prospect of not having to discuss their child's reading level at drop-off, I would be able to build a new sports hall, a new swimming pool, a new music block and six AstroTurf football and hockey pitches. It is often said: every cloud has a silver lining.

The gentle review of my admirable team of staff is also causing me a few grey hairs. Is it unreasonable to ask just six of my over-the-hill staff to consider retirement? To take the dignified way out before I have to declare them incompetent? To suggest that Fletcher maths is not innovative and that embracing coloured chalk is not a recognition of modern technology? To believe that there could be a staffroom without fat ankles and real hankies, where Horlicks with a slug of brandy to keep you going to lunch is not the answer? Oh no, they have dug their heels in like particularly reluctant pigs in the proverbial. They have enlisted the help of the parents to start singing their praises. All I can say, dear parents, is look at the school's abject failure to get any children into the elite echelon of senior schools during the past years and ask yourself what these teachers have been doing for the past 25 years. My intention is to relocate 'their' chairs from the common room to the shade of the diseased elm trees which we are felling over the summer break ... timber!

And so, if on the first day of the autumn term school is bathed in darkness, then you can conclude that we are indefinitely closed. I may have found happiness in the arms of my husband. I may even have remembered my children's names. Or alternatively it may be that the bursar used the last of the budget to pay for the port at the bursar's conference and we haven't paid the electricity bill.

Yours sincerely

Miss E Doff

Courses and events

satips CPD

For more information on any of the *satips* courses below, please contact Sarah Kirby-Smith, Course Director on coursedirector@satips.com

Maths

23 Sep *satips* Maths Conference London Mathematical Society
Speakers: Professor Stephen Molyneux (iPad Academy), Tom Barwood (LikeMinds Consulting). Four Workshops. Group discount. *satips* members £145.00, non-members £175 or £155 group discount for non members

English

15 Nov Inaugural national conference for teachers of English in independent prep schools The Bull Hotel, Gerrards Cross
Keynote Speakers: Sue Palmer and Fred Sedgwick, with a conference theme is developing confident writers. Workshops: A Carousel of six topics.
Fees: Full - £175.00, Early bird - £160, Group discount - £155.00 (for 2 or more delegates), *satips* members £145.00 The early bird fee will end on the 1st July 2013

Future courses

The *satips* 2013/14 course programme has been developed and expanded and will cover the following areas: Risk Assessment; Pastoral Leadership and development; Pastoral Care; Eliminating Failure in Language Learning; Using iPads in Curriculum areas; Learning Support; Pupil Motivation and support; Classics; Physical Literacy; Engaging the disengaged; Assessment for Learning; Behaviour management; PSHE; Art; Design Technology; Gifted and Talented; Religious Studies; Maths; Science; History

Full details will be posted on the website and in the course brochure which will be mailed to schools in June. For more information, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Kirby-Smith, Course Director on coursedirector@satips.com or 07766 306292.

Courses will take place in London, Birmingham, York and Bristol. Please do contact Sarah if there is any possibility that your school could host a course.

Other courses and events

BSA

Further details on BSA courses can be found via www.boarding.org.uk

12-14 May	Annual conference for Heads	The Grand Central Hotel, Glasgow
7 May	Leading the boarding team	Park Crescent Conference Centre, London
15 May	Child protection and safeguarding	The Bentley Hotel, London
16 May	e-Safety - Supporting Senior Boarders, Online Reputation and Risky Behaviours	Park Crescent Conference Centre, London
21 May	Meeting Challenges Associated with with Younger Boarders	Park Crescent Conference Centre, London

GSA

To access details of all courses and conferences included in the GSA Professional Development Programme visit: <http://www.gsa.uk.com/professional-development>

SAVE THE DATE – Cross Association Heads Conference 13-14 March 2014 at the Holiday Inn, Stratford-upon-Avon

16 May	Annual Conference	The Grand Hotel, Eastbourne
22 May	Learning outside the classroom	Hurst Lodge School, Ascot
6 June	How Middle Managers can raise standards through inspection skills	Rushmoor School, Bedford
13 June	Empowering Senior Teachers to make a difference in school	GEMS Sheffield School

Port Regis School

For more information, contact Brenda Marshall via BJM@portregis.com

11 Jun	Librarians in Preparatory Schools	Port Regis Prep, Dorset
8 Nov	English and ICT in Years 7 and 8	Port Regis Prep, Dorset

Others

27 Jun	5th national dyscalculia and maths learning difficulties conference	Cumberland Hotel, London
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Sport was enduring passion of long-serving teacher

Brian Gilyead, who taught at Aldwickbury School for 39 years, was the driving force behind Satipski

Brian Gilyead: 1938 - 2013

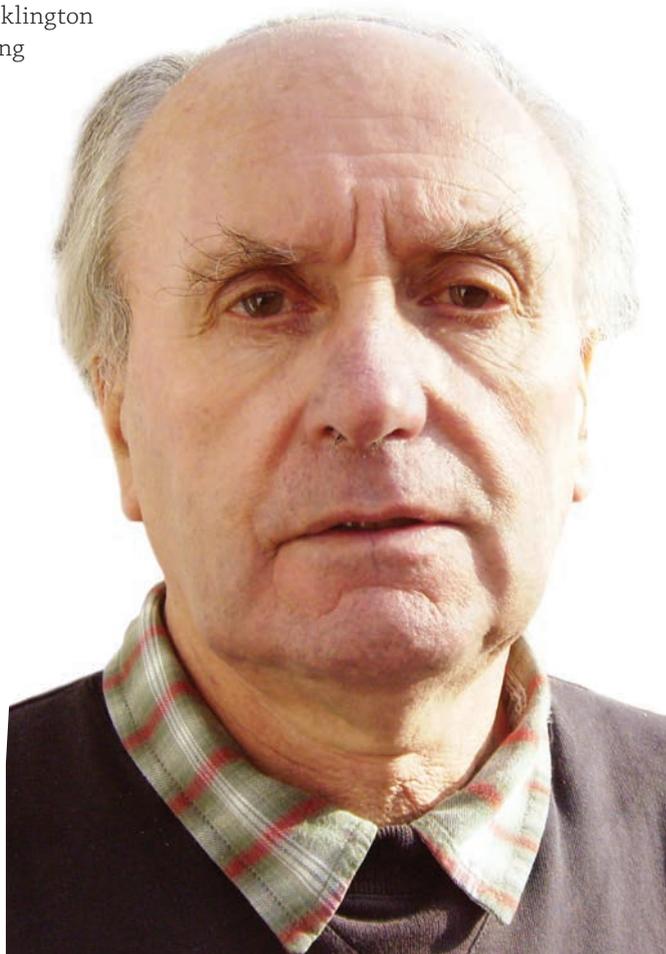
Brian was born and brought up in Yorkshire, educated at Pocklington School and Westminster College, London University. A lifelong York City fan, his early loves were football and cricket. He played a lot of rugby at school: hockey and tennis being added to the repertoire later.

After a few years teaching in various schools he entered the prep school world at Aldwickbury School, Harpenden, and stayed for 39 years. It was a very happy career, teaching history, scripture and lots of sport. Having discovered the joy of skiing, Brian ran 44 Aldwickbury ski trips, introducing countless boys to the mountains, mainly in Mandarfen and Val Cenis.

Skiing was his real love and in retirement he was able to enjoy teaching it to adults as well as children, and take real ski holidays, as opposed to all the working trips of earlier years, for school, the Kandahar Ski Club and ESSKIA. Brian served on the committee of the English Schools' Ski Association, being race secretary from its foundation in 1978 until 2006.

He took over Satipski in 1975 and was still running this event for prep school children in 2012. In retirement he took on editing the *satips* PE Broadsheet, producing his final edition in January 2013 having, as he put it, "not yet run out of friends to write articles". London Area Prep Schools' Athletics was another absorbing retirement activity which he thoroughly enjoyed, valuing all the friendships he made over the years.

It is fitting that he died at the end of a holiday, on a sailing ship in the Caribbean. He was travelling to the last.





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