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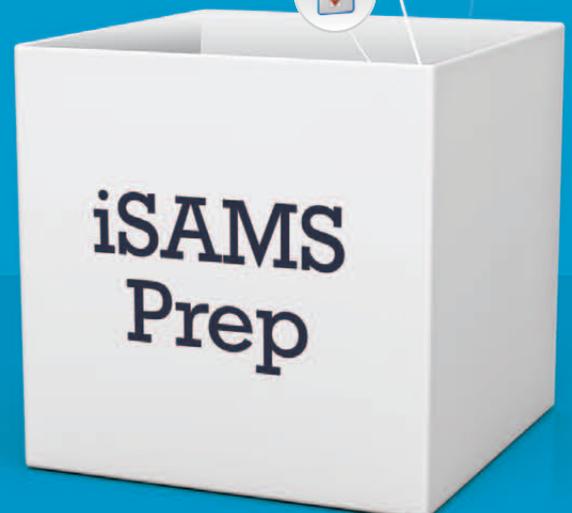
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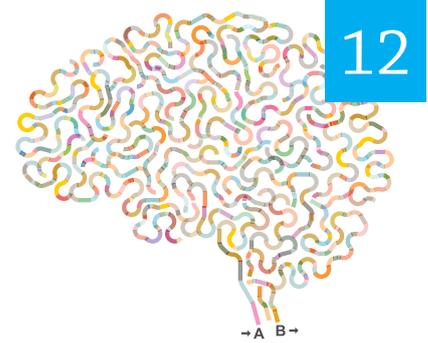
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# From the editor



We have had TV series to find the best allotment grower, the best seamstress, the best baker. While these programmes are addictive for some and loathed by others, there is an undeniable human fascination in finding the best in any conceivable category and so we shouldn't be surprised by the urge to look for 'the best' in our schools.

Indeed, the summer term is the point in the school year when we look back on the achievements of our pupils and search for excellence, rewarding it with prizes and scholarships.

Excellence should be encouraged and celebrated but I like to talk to pupils and staff about icing on the top of a delicious cake. Come with me on an imaginary journey. Let's imagine a delicious cupcake, beautifully presented in a tasteful paper wrapper and topped with a generous swirl of creamy icing, a dash of edible glitter and a crystallised violet. Our imaginary cupcake is very enticing but you know as well as I do that icing on its own is an unwholesome and unpalatable dish. The cake is the key. The icing of scholarships and academic prizes rest on the underlying cake of learning, and that is made by a mixture of stamina, curiosity, experimentation, passion, dedication and commitment, 'baked' in the right environment for the correct amount of time.

It is also worth remembering that, for most of our children, the cake is just fine without the icing. Learning to deal with the outcome of a scholarship contest in a mature manner, whether positive or not, is a skill that will serve your pupils well throughout their lives. The experience of not getting the icing can be the more profound and useful experience.

May I take my cake metaphor a little further? Consider how you feel if you bite through beautiful icing to a heavy and flavourless sponge. Similarly all those amazing facilities and extras that you offer will be irrelevant if your teaching and learning are not fantastic. Without good educational outcomes, your school will be the heavy, greyish banana bread left on the cake stall at the end of the fête.

Enjoy this last term of the academic year and, during it, perhaps you will set aside a little time to reflect on the art of cake making in your school. What are your key ingredients? What flavour sizzles through your sponge? Butter icing or royal icing? And while you are thinking about baking, please remember that only amateurs use icing to cover up cracks, burnt bits and a sunken centre. If these disasters happen, the master baker calmly weighs out the correct ingredients and, with care, prepares a new cake. We may be amateur bakers but we are professional educators. Let's make sure we don't use glamorous icing to hide a disappointing cake.

If you have an idea for an article or the next issue, please email me at [editor@prepschoolmag.co.uk](mailto:editor@prepschoolmag.co.uk)

## A thought for the term: Dr Anthony Seldon

Here is my proposal for the next UN International Day of Happiness. At 2pm GMT on 20th March 2015 all young people of school age fall totally silent for two minutes. Wherever they are, at school, at home, outside, in towns or fields, they all stop whatever they are doing, and fall completely still.

Language will never unite us, nor will ideologies, nor organised religion. They are all forces for separation. Stillness alone, and the love which is encountered in the depths of silence, will unite the world. Young people the world over know this. They are still in touch with the silence of the universe, which the noise of the world has not yet drowned out.

All children at school should be taught mindfulness, an ancient practice dating back to the Buddha, 2,600 years ago, but accessible to people of all faiths and none. It involves training the attention to be aware, in the present moment, of thoughts, feelings and body sensations that arise, without judgement or comment. The practice gradually develops our capacity to respond rather than merely react to what's happening around and within us. Those who practice mindfulness say that it boosts their happiness, connections to others, and the quality of their work and daily life.

Mindfulness works by reducing random thinking or rumination and replacing it by connectedness in the present to the senses, to immediate surroundings and to other

people. It was best described to me by a teacher many years ago as 'falling awake'. When we are mindful, we are fully alive, and we know it. We are able to act consciously and thoughtfully and from deep inside, rather than react with knee-jerk responses.

The UN has done much in its 70 years to foster peace and social justice for all people, especially the least fortunate. Happiness is not a luxury for the well off: it is the entitlement and indeed the birthright of all. The young should not expect their elders, sadly, to bestow stillness upon them, because the lives of powerful adults the world over are frenetic. These adults may once have known stillness when they were children, or when they first fell in love. But it has become a distant memory, an unheard sound pulsing in the far recesses of their mind.

That is why young people must take the initiative in this seventieth year for the United Nations. It is true that 2pm GMT will mean an early rise for those on the west coast of North and South America, and a late night for those in the Pacific. But what a splendid thing if the young of every nation and state on earth joined together in silence at the same moment of time. The stillness would be so profound and powerful that it would force adults to listen.

Anthony Seldon is Master of Wellington College and is the author of several biographies of British prime ministers.

# SATIPS Who we are and what we do

Support and training in Prep Schools

Paul Jackson, Director of Information, tells the story of an association committed to helping those who work in independent prep and junior schools achieve best practice



**Best  
practice**

The name SATIPS has been synonymous with the Preparatory School world for over 50 years. Those who teach and manage in prep schools are well used to hearing the name and are aware of some of the areas that this organisation provides but, rarely, does anyone know what the name SATIPS means, stands for or, indeed,

where it actually came from. Are you sitting comfortably?

From the outset, the organisation was formed by a group of teachers working in prep schools who, having spoken to each other, felt it was a good idea to share their ideas, thoughts and in some cases, concerns with other similar minded folk in

other schools. The idea of subject specific 'broadsheets' soon followed, as did an annual conference and a hierarchy of people to help organise the organisation. Like any Society, President, Chair, Vice –Chair, General Secretary and Council were duly elected-and an Administrator was brought on board in order to help



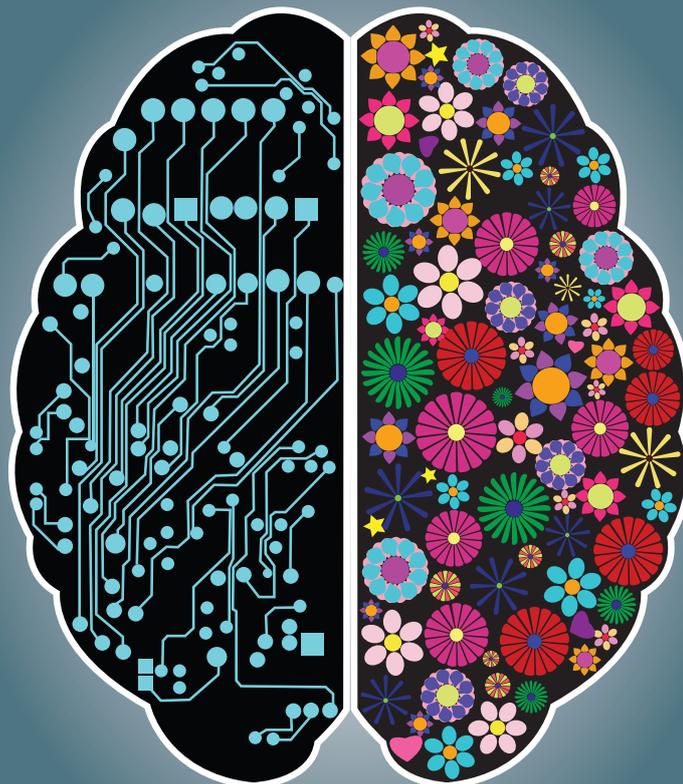
put all the ideas into practice. The name of the society, SATIPS, rather reflected the strange nomenclature which assisted in Schools at the time. Heads were Heads-and teachers were 'assistants'. As a result, the Society of Assistants teaching in Preparatory Schools –SATIPS- was born. Fortunately, the acronym has always been intriguingly easy to say-and "Support and Training in Preparatory Schools" reflected the more modern role of the Society. Thank goodness. From these humble beginnings, SATIPS has gone from strength to strength but has never knowingly gone away from the desire to help all those who work in the preparatory school environment to achieve best practice. The 19 subject specific Broadsheets are written by our subject leaders (Broadsheet Editors) and fortunately, due to the change from printed state to electronic, all broadsheets can be accessed by any one teacher reflecting the cross curricula nature of teaching in our schools. The website also now allows a rapid dissemination of information-something that those founding teachers would never have dreamt could happen. However, whilst the latter shows just one element of change, SATIPS has, for many years, offered competitions and challenges for pupils in schools including the handwriting competition, SATIPS SKI and the SATIPS challenge. The National Annual Prep School Art

exhibition and the Songfest stimulate that wonderful opportunity for staff and pupils from a range of schools to come together in a marvellous celebration of creativity and performance. This year, the Art exhibition is to be held at St Ronan's in Kent and the Society is always grateful to the many prep and senior schools who make their facilities available for various SATIPS events and meetings. This year we have been royally hosted by Dr Joe Spence at Dulwich and Dr Anthony Seldon at Wellington College for our termly council meetings-and SATIPS was delighted to provide organisational support for the recent Mindfulness in Schools conference at Loughborough University. There have been significant changes to the number and range of courses that SATIPS now provides. The provision of high quality courses to contribute to and support the professional development of satips members has been at the heart of the development of the SATIPS training programme in recent months. A perceived departure in some areas this year from the traditional more subject led courses has not detracted from the support schools have shown for the course programme in 2013 with over 60 courses running. The more generic content of some of the courses has made them accessible to all departments in their cross-

curricular content. Responding to articles in the press about the different learning styles of boys and girls led to Strategies to Maximise Boys' Potential with Tom Barwood. Similarly, in response to more subject led debate on improving access to language learning for pupils with moderate learning support needs led to Teaching Languages to Dyslexic Pupils with John Bald. Our commitment to the value of the programme to schools has meant that strong links have been forged with highly qualified and professional trainers who are acknowledged experts in their field, counting advisors to DfES committees in their number. The programme for 2014/15 will again provide excellent, inspirational, informative courses and conferences for schools with more academic subjects being introduced after consultation with broadsheet editors. Course Director, Sarah Kirby-Smith is always pleased to hear from schools or departments with specific training needs or requirements (coursedirector@satips.com). Membership starts at £195 by direct debit. Membership is for all your staff in your prep or junior school. There is a £25 discount on each course for member schools. Membership sends you broadsheets in 19 different subjects and access to all our events. www.satips.com

# Lin Yutang's 'idle' view of education

Matthew Jenkinson, director of studies at New College School, Oxford, poses some fundamental questions about why people should learn, what they should learn, and how they learn it



Whichever strand of education receives the attention of the government or media on any given day, there is usually an underlying assumption: education should lead to direct material productivity. When we start worrying about standards of literacy or numeracy, there is usually a comparison to countries against whom we are economically competitive. When the discussion turns to the length of the school day or vacations, the implied question is: how do we squeeze more out of pupils in the time given? We are regaled with stories about parents who hover and push for their children to achieve the highest standards, at as young an age as possible, in academic subjects, sport, music, Model United Nations, or anything that will make

their CV stand out at the next stage of their lives. Those stages include getting to the 'best' secondary school, the 'best' university, to get the 'best' degree, to get the 'best' job. And how do we tend to define 'best' when it comes to employment? Money.

To an extent, this is fair enough. We do need to remain economically competitive in a rapidly-changing world. Our children do need to be able to afford food and housing, even if the chance of them being able to afford *houses* diminishes rapidly. But it is not always 100% given that the best way to remain competitive is to push as hard as possible at every given task, to push our way up (often artificial) league tables. To remain competitive, we need to remain intellectually

vigorous, rigorous and flexible. This is not the same thing as pushing our children to the limit, in the hope that one day they will become the best accountant in the City of London.

An alternative view of thinking, thought and education came from China, via the United States. Lin Yutang was an academic, linguist, inventor and writer who published dozens of books between the 1930s and 1970s. One of his most notable, *The Importance of Living*, was first published in New York in 1937. As the title suggests, Lin was tackling the huge philosophical (and practical) issue of how to live a fulfilled life; and central to that life was how we use and develop our minds.

# In essence, he rejected the acquisition of knowledge, preferring instead the development of taste: 'To know what to love and what to hate is to have taste in knowledge'

Lin's philosophy was not just about education. He also covered such classics as 'on having a stomach', 'the cult of the idle life', 'on lying in bed', 'on sitting in chairs' and 'the inhumanity of western dress'. But the methods by which we learn, and what we should learn, infused his essays. Lin claimed that he was neither 'deep' nor 'well-read'. He achieved his view of humanity and the world through varied conversation and close observation. His sources ranged from a Shanghai street car conductor to a lion cub in the zoo, and indeed 'any writer who does not kill our sense of curiosity in life'. These writers came from across the centuries: Po Chüyi from the eighth, Su Tungp'o from the eleventh, and T'u Ch'ihshui, Yüan Chunglang, Li Chowu (among many others) from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Overall, Lin claimed to espouse 'an idle philosophy born of an idle life'. Yet it was this 'idle' approach to life – combined no doubt with his innate talent – that took Lin from the mountains of Fujian province to the ivory towers of Harvard. There might just be something he can teach us about how to learn and teach.

## Logic versus Feeling

Lin viewed the human brain as being like 'an octopus or a starfish with tentacles'. These tentacles were for 'feeling truth and eating it'. He was deeply sceptical of abstract, logical, thinking, because this took the mind away from the 'sensory apparatus', making it 'devalitized, dehumanized and degenerate'. Too much focus on abstract thinking led to a

fundamental misunderstanding of the human condition – it ignored what people did in their day-to-day lives, what people were actually like.

In addition to a focus on practical thinking, Lin celebrated the lack of rationality in the human mind. He liked that fact that people behaved irrationally, they were not all saints, and they were not all cool and calm intellectuals. 'Imagine a world', he argued, 'in which ... everyone proceeds to carry out with logical precision a career that he mapped out for himself at the age of ten – good-bye to this happy human world!'

All the excitement and uncertainty of life would be gone. There would be no literature because there would be no sin, no misbehaviour, no human weakness, no upsetting passion, no prejudices, no irregularities and, worst of all, no surprises ... Human fallibility is the very essence of the colour of life.

This did not necessarily make him anti-intellectual; he was in the wrong profession if it did. But he maintained an ambivalence about his position: 'Am I anti-intellectualistic? Perhaps yes; perhaps no'. He preferred to have more concrete views about his approach to life: 'I am merely in love with life, and being in love with life, I distrust the intellectually profound'. If humans were all perfectly rational, they would not achieve wisdom, but degenerate into a collection of 'automatons' whose brains responded to the world's stimuli in the same detached way that a gas meter registers the flow of gas.

Education should focus then, argued

Lin, on our emotions and senses rather than on abstract ideas. Then we would develop 'a sort of warm, glowing, emotional and intuitive thinking'. The 'higher pleasures of the mind' – by which he meant philosophy, literature, art, religion and music – depended on senses and feelings rather than cold and hard ideas.

Rather amusingly, Lin considered the British to be a good example of a people who historically had possessed 'a perfectly sound mind'. He claimed that the British had 'bad logic', but they had 'very good tentacles in their brains for sensing danger and preserving life'. Indeed, British history was a roll-call of illogical and irrational developments. British institutions, Lin claimed, evolved pragmatically as pieces of a 'patchwork', while the British Empire would survive only so long as Brits shunned reason and sensible, rational, cold-hard thought: 'no one can go about conquering the world if he has doubts about himself'.

## Knowledge and Taste

That was how Lin considered we should explore the world and learn about it. But what did he think *should* be learnt? In essence, he rejected the acquisition of knowledge, preferring instead the development of taste: 'To know what to love and what to hate is to have taste in knowledge'. Lin disliked the kind of people who knew thousands of facts, or who were totally up-to-speed with current affairs, but who could not make a sound judgment. 'Such persons', he argued, 'have erudition, but no discernment, or taste'.



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Once the educated person had developed the correct taste in what to love or hate, then they could develop their charm. Much of this charm would come through the ability to think things through properly and independently, and ‘unwillingness to be bulldozed by any form of humbug, social, political, literary, artistic, or academic’. Along with taste and charm would come the development of courage. It takes such courage to stand up against the seemingly convincing, but ultimately vacuous, person who has read a huge amount and can drop the right names, but who loves the things they should hate, hates the things they should love, and who is unable to come up with any sound judgments.

Lin blamed the modern school system for putting too much focus on mechanized accumulation of facts and the pursuit of scholarship over the pursuit of taste or wisdom. Essentially, he thought that pupils were ‘created’ in schools, in the same way that a product was ‘created’ in a factory. However, Lin does not suggest how one decides what is worthy and what is not, what is good taste and bad taste, without *knowledge* of what one is judging and what it can be judged against. He is also less convincing when it comes to teaching pupils ‘a course of compulsory studies’. Lin argues that we should not teach such a course, because it ‘implies that a man who has gone through the prescribed course ipso facto knows all there is to know for an educated man’. In contrast, it could be argued that the course is just an introduction to

some aspects of the world, and done properly it is appreciated as such. The educated man or woman keeps learning beyond their school years, and has a desire to do so.

### Playful curiosity

In Lin’s view, humanity evolved towards civilization due to our ‘playful curiosity’. Just as a monkey looks curiously at the ear-lobe of a fellow monkey, usually looking for lice, so we developed by ‘fumbling’ curiously, investigating the world around us. Humanity continued to develop, in Lin’s view, because we continued – and continue – to chase after ‘some form or other of lice that is bothering human society’. This curiosity led us to explore ‘freely and playfully’, because the human mind is designed to be interested in all manner of topics and problems. Fundamentally, for Lin, this was for enjoyment, not for material gain: ‘The monkeys do not chase after lice in order to eat them, but for the sheer fun of it’. The process of obtaining knowledge, then, was a ‘form of play’; play was a natural instinct in and of itself. Learning and scholarship came through ‘an interest in things in themselves and a playful, idle desire to know them as they are, and not because that knowledge directly or immediately helps in feeding our stomach’.

This is an approach that we are in danger of losing today, as we encourage our pupils to focus more and more on cramming in more and more information, getting higher and higher grades, more and more qualifications, in the hope that one

day they will cash in their glittering CVs for financial gain. Lin is wrong to go quite so far in criticizing the acquisition of factual knowledge in a carefully-structured school system, but he is right to question the approach to education that assumes ‘the human mind can be studied like a sewerage system and the waves of thought measured like the waves of a radio’. He is also right to posit some fundamental questions about why people should learn, what they should learn, and how they learn it.

Fundamentally, Lin wanted education to return to its literal roots: the natural curiosity of children who pottered around at leisure, privately exploring the world around them, for nothing more than enjoyment. He had little time for the view that the end of education was direct material productivity, nor for the idea that knowledge should be crow-barred into people’s brains intensely and mechanically. In contrast, if children were given the time idly to spread their ‘tentacles’ and irrationally ‘feel’ the world around them, they would develop taste and courage, not just knowledge. They would advance in ways that could not necessarily be measured in the same way that we read a gas meter. They would also learn how to be flexible intellectually, to respond to the higher things in life, and to be personally fulfilled in a world that is not ‘a syllogism or argument, it is a being’, and in a universe that ‘does not talk, it lives; it does not argue, it merely gets there’.

Matthew Jenkinson is director of studies at New College School, Oxford

Lin blamed the modern school system for putting too much focus on mechanized accumulation of facts and the pursuit of scholarship over the pursuit of taste or wisdom

# Growing at a child's pace

Andrew Hammond is concerned about premature adultification

Jonathan's alarm sounds at 7.00am. Half awake, he staggers into the bathroom, brushes his teeth, dampens down the flowery crop of tufts at the crown of his head and wipes the crust of sleep from his tired eyes. Getting dressed, he struggles to fasten the top button on his tightening shirt and pulls the tie up to his neck. The collar nestles into the familiar red ridges from yesterday's sweat and starch.

After a rushed breakfast of cereal and orange juice and a twenty minute crawl through stationary traffic, Jonathan finds himself at the place where he will spend the next ten hours, as he did yesterday and the day before, and will tomorrow and the next day, and the next, sat at a desk, gazing out of the window, wondering if the sun will last until the weekend respite. In the evenings, the brief window of time between returning home and going to bed is spent completing assignments required for the next day at work.

Jonathan's mind weighs heavy with the stresses and strains of a working life – a world of deadlines, accountability, conformity and meeting the expectations of others. A world in which achieving is good, dawdling is bad and the worst sin of all is wasted time.

Dreams, plans, projects and hobbies are shelved for holidays, when the tie loosens its grip, the red sores heal and creativity starts flowing again.

Jonathan is eight years old.

No teacher, at least none I have ever met, takes pleasure in the premature

adultifying of his or her pupils. No classroom practitioner seeks to rob its occupants of the *joie de vie* and mischievous curiosity with which they were born. Ours is a caring profession, after all.

If premature adultification is happening, it's because of the system and the values and demands placed on it by the society we've made. No teacher wants to rob Jonathan of his childhood. Every teacher I've ever interviewed shares a love of children, a fascination for childhood and a keen desire to 'make a difference'. But the dreams and aspirations we had as newly qualified teachers have found their way to the same refuge as Jonathan's own shelf of dreams. Our shelf is labeled 'ideology'. Our ambitions and epiphanies lie dormant, in the ring binders and lecture notes and annotated textbooks of the past. Reality seems different. It's cluttered with gobbets of curriculum knowledge to be taught, learned, retained and regurgitated so that we can measure both the success of children as learners and us as teachers.

The premature adultifying of pupils for the purpose of passing entrance examinations and fulfilling the dreams and expectations of their fee-paying parents is a concern voiced by many these days. I have no doubt that the rise in childhood depression and the fall in standards of behaviour in UK classrooms can be explained, in part, by this loss of childhood and the need to conform to adult codes and practices. But pave over a flower bed with slabs and you'll soon see that

weeds find a way through cracks in the patio.

Such portentous commentary makes uneasy reading for practitioners and does little to motivate us as we too don our work suits and make for the classroom. But recognising the sanctity of childhood, and the importance of fun, adventure, creativity and curiosity should be liberating for us too. An adulthood that is built on a childhood spent solely preparing for the stresses of adult life is, ironically, doomed to failure. But an adulthood built on a secure and happy childhood is one that will succeed, isn't it? Hurrying children through childhood will not.

I don't know where this has come from. I don't know why it's happened. I suspect it's a culmination of many things in modern society, not least the pace at which we live it. But it is a poor indictment of education that phrases like 'child-centred' or 'character education' are necessary at all.

An education that allows for ruddy cheeks, muddy knees and a frog in your pocket would be more enjoyable for everyone. Ironically, this is what prep schools have always been good at. Adventure, character-building, educating the whole child – these are the things we do so well. Entrance examinations are not going to go away. Yes, we would like the leaders of over-subscribed, fashionable senior schools to use greater imagination in the way they select their students, thus freeing prep school pupils from the shackles of VR, NVR, 11+ and 13+,



and yes, we would like our own fee-paying parents to slow down and stop hurrying and diarizing their children through childhood, but at least we are in prime position to redress the balance.

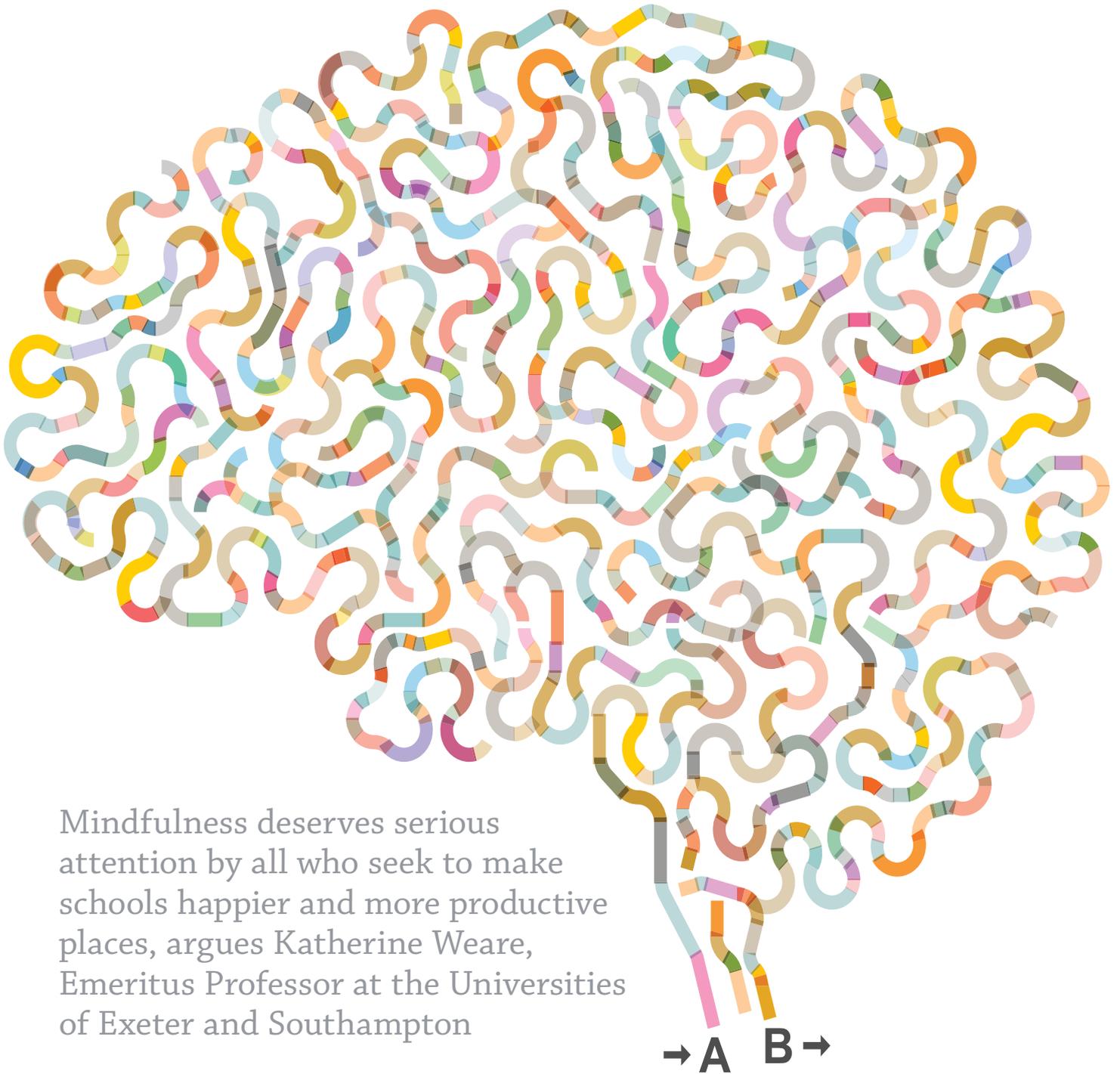
A brave prep school Head will know the importance of adventurous, child-centred teaching and will give licence to his or her staff to focus as much on the experience of schooling as on the results of it. A brave Head will be able to remind senior schools, and anxious parents too, that real success comes when courage, confidence and curiosity are not shelved for the holidays, but are cherished in the classroom too.

The debate over knowledge versus skills, creativity versus academic rigour, and a life of tests versus preparing for the tests of life, rumbles on and I fear this may have been yet another band-wagon-jumping polemic. But something needs to be done quickly. The current generation of school leavers may have been hurried through childhood but readers of this magazine are well placed to slow things down for the next cohort. Provided you have a brave Head at the helm – and you have to be in order to do the job – you are probably more able to inject some character-building adventure into your teaching than you think. It may involve re-educating your parents about what preparatory

school education is actually about, but you can tell them that. The workshops I have led in this regard, both to staff and parents, have always been well received and a collective sigh of relief can often be heard in the room when you show that in your prep school, despite all the stresses and strains of entrance examinations and pre-tests, you are still able to safeguard the happiness of childhood. And I've not met a parent yet who does not want that, really.

Andrew Hammond is an author and educational consultant

# Mindfulness in schools: a growing movement



Mindfulness deserves serious attention by all who seek to make schools happier and more productive places, argues Katherine Weare, Emeritus Professor at the Universities of Exeter and Southampton

There is currently a major growth of interest and activity around mindfulness for children and young people, particularly in the context of schools, with theory, practice, interventions, research, conferences and publications proliferating. The evidence for its effectiveness is still young, but is growing, positive and promising.

### What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness involves learning to direct our attention to our experience as it is unfolding, moment by moment, with open-minded curiosity and acceptance. Rather than worrying about what has happened or might happen, mindfulness trains us to respond skilfully to whatever is happening right now, be that good or bad. This includes paying close attention to inner states such as thoughts, emotions and physical sensations, as well as to what is happening in the outside world.

### Where did mindfulness come from?

Mindfulness is said to have originated in Buddhist thinking and meditation practice over two-and-a-half thousand years ago where the purpose was to address and relieve self-induced suffering caused by the dysfunctional ways people habitually tend to react to their experience. However most religions have been clear about the value of contemplation for improving the quality of life. Over the last 30 years, mindfulness has become secularised and simplified to suit a Western context. In the 1970s anecdotal and research findings about the ability of meditation to reduce unhealthy psychological symptoms triggered interest in mindfulness as a healthcare intervention. Jon Kabat-Zinn at the Medical Centre at the University of Massachusetts introduced the first eight week structured mindfulness skills training programme which gave considerable psychological, and some physical, relief, to patients experiencing intractable severe pain and distress from a wide range of chronic physical health conditions.

Mindfulness interventions and research have proliferated across the world over the last thirty years, and the emerging evidence base suggests that mindfulness has a wide range of potential applications for adults and young people. The most common form of mindfulness intervention for adults is still a version of the classic Kabat-Zinn course, usually experienced as a weekly two to three hour session over 8 weeks, which aims to reduce

stress (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: 'MBSR') or to prevent depressive relapse (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy: 'MBCT') . These courses are now readily accessible in most towns in the UK. MBCT is now a therapy officially recommended for publically funded treatment for recurrent depression by the UK National Institute for Clinical Excellence having proved to be twice as effective as treatment as usual.

### How is mindfulness learned?

There are a growing number of types of mindfulness interventions, including, and increasingly, ones for children and young people. They include long and short taught courses, one to one or group therapy, tailor made interventions for specific groups, self help manuals and cds, and online versions. Contexts include clinical settings, the workplace, schools, universities and the community. Although details and illustrations vary in different contexts, the core activities, rationale and mechanisms for how mindfulness appears to work are essentially the same.

In line with the original MBSR course devised by Kabat-Zinn (1996) participants are led in simple meditation/ concentration exercises which enable them to become more able to be 'with' their present experience. Through giving close attention to feelings and sensations, such as the breath, sound, contact, and the fluctuating sensations that arise in different parts of the body, participants gradually acquire the ability to be aware of the passing and changing nature of all experience - thoughts, emotions and physical sensations.

### How does mindfulness work?

Over time participants, young and old, who practice regularly report that they gradually learn to sustain and focus their attention and accept experiences of all kinds in a more curious, interested and open minded rather than a judgmental way; they also discover how to use felt physical sensations of the breath and the body as 'anchors' to return to when their minds wander and negative, ruminative and repetitive thoughts take over. They come to see that thoughts are mental events rather than facts and can be allowed to let come and go: this realization helps loosen the grip of habitual, mindless activity including negative ruminations and worries, and produces less reactivity and impulsiveness, and a greater ability to examine thoughts more rationally. They also learn how to turn towards rather than try to avoid or

There is a sound evidence base, based on the most rigorous of research methods, the randomized control trial (RCT), for the impacts of mindfulness for adults on most aspects of wellbeing

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suppress uncomfortable emotions and body sensations. This has significant effects in reducing the impulsive reactivity that psychologists have identified as a root cause of mental health disorders of various kinds. Practising these new skills gradually modifies habitual mental and behavioural patterns which otherwise create and maintain negative mental states, such as stress, anxiety and depression, and makes for greater mental stability, calm, acceptance, appreciation and higher levels of happiness and wellbeing.

### What is the evidence that it does any good?

There is a sound evidence base, based on the most rigorous of research methods, the randomized control trial (RCT), for the impacts of mindfulness for adults on most aspects of wellbeing: on physical health problems - such as pain, blood pressure and the immune function; on mental health - such as depression, anxiety, and stress; and on cognitive development - such as executive function, attention, and metacognition. Mindfulness training is cost effective, with long term effects often apparent after three years, and relatively short inputs producing discernable results: four days of mindfulness training was sufficient to improve mindfulness, visual-spatial memory, working memory and sustained attention. Even short periods of mindfulness practice have been shown to reshape the neural pathways in the brain in ways which increase the areas associated with kindness, compassion and rationality and decrease those involved in anxiety, worry and impulsiveness.

### Why should children and young people learn about mindfulness?

Over the last ten years mindfulness for children and young people in mainstream settings has developed apace, initially in therapeutic contexts, most recently in also schools, all over the world. Research on the effects of mindfulness and young people is not yet as extensive as work with adults but research is now growing rapidly. The results of the work that has taken place are promising, and suggest that the young people who take part in mindfulness courses not only enjoy and appreciate them but often benefit too - the effects of mindfulness on the young are proving to be very similar to those on adults.

Well conducted mindfulness interventions, such as the .b Mindfulness in Schools Project, have been shown to help address the problems of the young people who take part and reduce their worries, anxiety, distress, reactivity and bad behaviour, improve sleep, self-esteem, and bring about greater calmness, relaxation, and self-awareness. Mindfulness has also been shown to be capable of contributing directly to the development of cognitive and performance skills in the young. It would appear that when children and young people learn to be more 'present', they can pay attention better and improve the quality of their performance in the classroom, on the sports field, and in the performing arts, for example. They can become more focused, more able to approach situations from a novel perspective, more able to draw more effectively on previously-learned material, have less anxiety and greater ability to pay attention.

### What about the teachers?

Mindfulness needs to be taught only by those who regularly practise mindfulness themselves and have been appropriately trained. Research shows clearly that mindfulness is more effective when taught by those who embody the particular qualities it develops, such as open minded curiosity, kindness, acceptance, trust, patience, and non-striving, and who have skills of focusing, and paying and switching attention. Teachers need to be able to model what they are teaching, and to understand and relate directly and empathically to somewhat unusual experiences their students will be having from a solid base of experience in their own life. (Similarly, you would not expect a teacher who had never been in water to teach swimming effectively!)

Practising mindfulness is likely to bring clear benefits for the teachers themselves, both for their own wellbeing and their ability to teach effectively. There are some promising early studies of the impact of mindfulness training on the wellbeing of school staff. Impacts shown so far again include in many cases the reduction of stress and recurrent negative thoughts and ruminations, anxiety, and sleep difficulties, and increases in reflection, emotional self-awareness and compassion. Teachers who practise mindfulness themselves appear to be more able to create positive changes both in and out of the classroom; are able to focus more clearly on key ideas; are better able to prioritise and prepare class material; are more able to focus on implementing what they intend to do without distractions; create calm and orderly climates and induce better behaviour in their pupils.

### Conclusions

Innovative and exciting mindfulness in school programmes for students and their teachers are being developed, and outcomes from the evaluations of various interventions look promising. Well conducted mindfulness interventions have been shown to be popular with students and staff, capable of addressing the many and varied problems of young people and their teachers, and help them positively flourish. Mindfulness deserves serious attention by all who would seek to make our schools happier as well as more productive places, our school staff more fulfilled, and help our young people grow into well balanced, successful and caring adults.

Katherine is Professor at the University of Exeter and the University of Southampton. She is known internationally for her work on children's mental health and well-being and social and emotional learning, she was a key player in the UK's social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL programme). She is a trained teacher of mindfulness for adults, children and young people. Her wide ranging publications include overviews and reviews of the evidence base and she regularly provides keynotes and presentations at national and international conferences. She can be contacted at [skw@soton.ac.uk](mailto:skw@soton.ac.uk)

# Teaching well-being and happiness

Can prep and junior schools teach well-being and happiness? Debra Farhi investigates



Unfortunately, some Heads associate mindfulness as being 'hippy-dippy', mystical or weird. However, this is a way of living which has been around for 2600 years

Matthieu Ricard, the renowned French Buddhist monk, asserts that well-being is characterised by serenity and fulfilment, a state that pervades and underlies all emotional states. Felicia Huppert, Emeritus Professor of Psychology and Director of the Well-being Institute at Cambridge University, maintains that well-being is a "a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively."

Should we be teaching well-being in schools and is it a concept that can indeed be taught? Many argue that 'values education' is something that is the domain of families and centres of worship such as churches, synagogues and the like. Neil Hawkes, the founder of values-based education, argues that schools do not operate optimally in 'values neutral mode.' Young people spend a great proportion of their lives at school and values education can complement and when necessary, compensate for what is missing at home.

According to the 2007 Unicef Report Card studying child well-being in rich countries, the UK scored last overall among 21 industrialised countries and came last in three of the categories measured: relationships, behaviour and risks, and subjective well-being.

In 2010, the coalition government brought in the SEAL Programme which covered five main areas: social awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy, and social interactions. Even David Cameron admitted that the UK's well-being cannot be judged by GDP alone but rather "well-being is about the beauty of our surroundings, the quality of our

culture, and above all, the strength of our relationships."

According to the Office of National Statistics study in personal well-being in 2012/13, London had the lowest average rating for life satisfaction and the highest average for anxiety. Hence, from a moral, ethical and legal perspective, we should be teaching well-being.

How then do we teach well-being? Teaching mindfulness, a subject which has become increasingly popular, is the means through which many independent and maintained schools are accomplishing this. Mindfulness, according to Jon Kabat-Zinn, the father of mindfulness in medicine, "is being aware of the present moment without judgment or resistance." Dr John Teasdale, renowned psychologist from Cambridge University, explains that the aims for our students should be more than simply functional such as increasing exam results, increased memory retention etc, but rather we should have more ambitious goals for them such as greater self-understanding by instilling values such as tolerance, patience and self-awareness.

The Mindfulness in Schools Project (MISP) founded by Chris Cullen, a former teacher at Hampton School, and Richard Burnett, a current teacher at Tonbridge School, did just that by creating a mindfulness programme for schools. In 2007, they launched the 'b Programme' which simply means "stop, breathe and be!". The programme is incorporated in PSHE lessons once per week over nine weeks and each lesson is 40-45 minutes. The course encompasses aspects such

as: developing a non-judgemental attitude, taming our wandering attention, recognising stressors, being fully present, developing a witness conscious, applying mindfulness in all facets of our life and embracing our dark emotions. The programme advocates tools such as beditations (lying down meditations), mindful walking, '7/11 breathing', and encouraging .b texts among pupils.

Unfortunately, some Heads associate mindfulness as being 'hippy-dippy', mystical or weird. However, this is a way of living which has been around for 2600 years. Numerous research studies have confirmed that mindfulness correlates positively with immune function, working memory, resilience, physical changes in the brain, emotion, attention, self-esteem and longevity. Moreover, mindfulness training is being sought by leading companies such as Google, Apple, KPMG, as well as sports athletes and the NHS.

Nevertheless, they are adamant that in order for pupils to learn well-being, they need to be taught by those who experience it and have incorporated it into their day to day lives. A prerequisite to the course is the need to complete a .b Foundation course or MBSR course (mindfulness-based stress reduction course) over an eight-week period. Once completed, individuals need to demonstrate that they have incorporated tenets of the course into their everyday lives over a six-month period.

Mindfulness allows for emotion regulation and self-awareness through a secular approach. In light of the success of the .b programme around the world



# Everyone needs to know about legal highs and cyber bullying

Legal highs are being sold across the counter in newsagents, petrol stations and takeaways, the very places a child might go to buy sweets or a drink. Cyber bullying, particularly on the social networks, is an increasingly worrying trend amongst younger children.

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(it is taught in 12 countries), the *paws.b* programme was developed by Rhian Roxburgh and Tabitha Sawyer, primary teachers from Ysol Pen Bryn Primary School in north Wales in conjunction with a mindfulness trainer from Bangor University in Wales as well as Cullen and Burnett. The course incorporates the same concepts as .b except it is targeted for children aged 7-11 years of age. Roxburgh and Sawyer integrated and piloted the programme in the National Curriculum subjects as well as PSHE lessons. After several weeks, they noticed students fought less and the degree of academic improvement was significantly higher in those students who benefited from the course. Moreover, they were often asked for recommendations from parents who were keen to continue the practice at home. They said it wasn't necessarily "plain sailing, however, most children do get it straight away and very few reject it." The full programme is due to be rolled out to other schools over the next few months.

Dr Neil Hawkes, founder of the International Values Education Trust and former Headteacher at West Kidlington School, Oxfordshire, once a failing school in virtually all respects, transformed his school by teaching values in every aspect of the school. Each month a new value was studied and incorporated into each subject. For example, in English lessons, students could reflect on why Jack, the main antagonist in *Lord of the Flies*, should be forgiven. Hawkes explained that "values became the platform for which curricular, policy, organisational and pedagogical decisions were made." As a result, this had a positive impact on all educational measures (objective and subjective); the only explanation given by the Ofsted Inspector was the effect of the school's values-based programme. It was highlighted by Lord Layard as a role model for

schools to follow in his report for the Children's Society.

In the trend to educate our children with ethical values, the Dharma School, an independent school in Brighton which bases its instruction entirely on Buddhist principles (rather than Buddhism as a religion), has the majority of its pupils from families that do not practise the Buddhist faith. Parents are attracted to the school because of the Buddhist teachings such as conflict resolution through compassion, interdependence and community, universal responsibility and mindfulness in thought, feeling and action. Rather than imposing discipline through regimented rules, students learn self-discipline as an important quality to develop in themselves; they will be respected to the degree to which they respect others.

Elena Alexe, Head of PSHE at Northwood Prep, explained that their PSHE programme was completely revamped in the last two years using Carol Cattley and Jini Lavelle's Goodwill teaching guide: mindfulness for schools and the well-being curriculum developed by Dr Llona Boniwell. The tenets of positive psychology were encompassed by teaching guided meditations, mindfulness through activities such as eating and walking, and gratitude letters to pupils' parents (read privately at school). The traditional topics such as road safety, drugs, citizenship, etc, though still relevant, had a less significant emphasis and were branded under a separate Life Skills course.

After attending the recent 2014 Mindfulness Conference, the Dragon School, which currently integrates concepts from the Family Links Nurturing Programme, also plans to overhaul their school-wide pastoral programme in the next academic year.

Paul Jackson, Head of Humanities at Brooke House School in Leicestershire, teaches mindfulness in his RE lessons and explains the distinction to being mindful and "mind full" to his students. I spoke to one of his Year 8 pupils, who explained that doing a meditation increased her concentration and energy in her subsequent lessons.

As rising mental health issues soar among our youth and our teachers, it is obvious that chasing league table results is not the answer. Without a sense of well-being in ourselves, it is not possible to nurture well-being in others. Believing that gap can be fixed with more sport, drama or an on-site psychologist is not the answer. Dr Martin Seligman, a champion for positive psychology, states that "flourishing is experienced deeply and is not dependent on things, it's simply a way of being." Schools should foremost offer opportunities to enhance a student's emotional, physical and spiritual well-being and provide them with a sense of purpose that will take them beyond the school gates.

Professors Alan Krueger and Daniel Kahneman from Princeton University claim that "the belief that high income is associated with good mood is widespread but mostly illusory", yet, interestingly we are still striving for more. Our society has conditioned us to believe that happiness lies outside ourselves and that it can be acquired through more money, power, approval or even love. Seeking validation from people, places or things always puts us in a position of wanting where we inevitably relinquish our own power. All wealth, peace and joy is within us; true abundance is a state of consciousness and our divine essence. Whatever is missing in our experience is not based on what hasn't been given to us but what we haven't discovered or yet activated within ourselves.

# Not just another hoop to jump through

Alex Osiatynski, Headmaster of Bilton Grange, prefers 'performance coaching' to 'performance managing'

In the last issue of *Prep School* magazine I wrote about my experience of the Masters in Educational Leadership course at Buckingham University and how it helped me to kickstart my time as a Head. Perhaps the most crucial part of the course, at least for me personally, was that which dealt with the formal aspect of relations with teaching staff, known as performance management.

The biggest problem with performance management is that it is often viewed as a compliance issue, and a boring one at that: something to keep the inspectors and governors happy. In fact nothing could be further from the truth: effective performance management is the way in which a Headteacher can build a culture of excellence in the classroom, coalesce the teaching staff into a team which values outstanding classroom practice and by virtue of this, the school transmits its culture, values and ethos through its teachers to the pupils and parents. In short, whether a school is already excellent or has major issues to address, performance management is the way to make school improvement happen.

Before going further, I should be clear that I dislike the moniker 'performance management', just as I dislike the word 'appraisal'. Performance management sounds terribly dry, compliance-driven and directive – can you really manage how a teacher performs – and appraisal means, of course, 'judgement' which sounds, well, judgemental. Indeed, the proof in the pudding of many performance management systems is

that they are dry, soulless processes which are treated as a compliance issue to appease the inspectorate: such systems never achieve the goals mentioned above.

So what are the goals of performance management? Simply put, they are to encourage reflective practice in the classroom, to support teachers in the pursuit of teaching excellence and in the background to provide confidence to other key stakeholders in the school (parents, governors) that monitoring of teaching and learning is ongoing. A step change in recent years has been the importance attached to dialogue and the development of coaching conversations; this is why I have renamed Bilton Grange's appraisal system 'performance coaching and evaluation', as this best reflects my desire for a shared process. For those unfamiliar with the idea of coaching, the teacher who is being 'coached' is encouraged to find the answers to their own questions and issues, whilst the conversation brings out and distils the issues the teacher wants to address.

There can be no doubt that in everything to do with performance management teachers have to have the right mindset to develop, refine and improve their practice and the starting point has to be the concept that we can all, always, strive to do better. They also have to be open and willing to welcome others into their classroom who will offer encouragement and support but will also make comments about what is seen, including what might be done more effectively to meet the learning needs of the pupils better, make the

lesson more engaging, or assess the pupils' understanding with more precision.

Lesson observation is central and critical to effective performance management, and therefore a great deal of thought needs to go into how to carry this out. There is no one right way and many different opinions, and without doubt the greatest challenge is providing the balance between the need for developmental support to teachers and the monitoring of standards with reporting to governors. Whilst not diametrically opposed there are certainly tensions between the two, but the key issues are consistency and honesty. The easiest lesson in the world to observe is the example of outstanding practice: far harder to pick sensitively through a lesson which is mediocre or substandard (although I would posit that mediocre is substandard!).

At Bilton Grange the way I worked towards finding this balance was to generate two types of feedback. The first is a discursive, narrative and overtly developmental feedback, written up after a verbal feedback discussion (ie, the conversation is not one-way). The second is an ISI observation form completed ahead of that discussion: and yes, that form has grades from 1 (outstanding) to 4 (unsatisfactory). This will cause some nervousness – actually giving other teachers, within your school, grades for their teaching? Well, yes – after all ISI will do exactly that when they inspect. As an ISI inspector myself I had the confidence that this would give a good degree of clarity to the observation

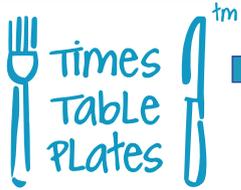
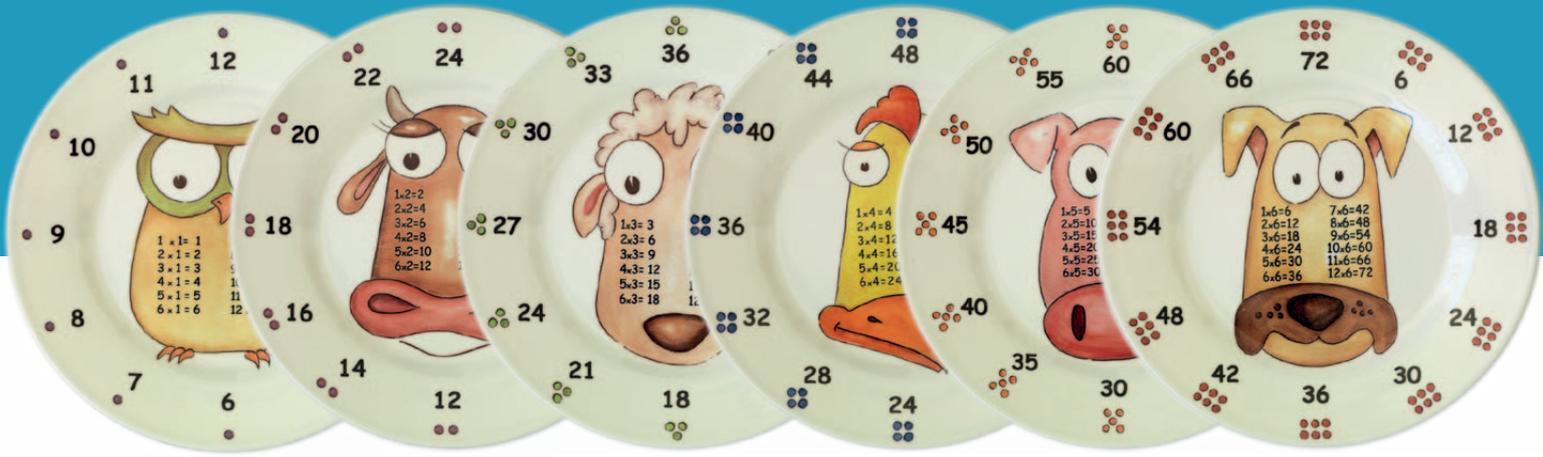
process, and a consistency in what different teachers would experience. Giving teachers confidence that their observation will be consistent with how other teachers are observed is absolutely critical; whilst I set myself the stiff challenge of observing every teacher teach in my first half term that is clearly not sustainable, and so the next stage is to ensure consistency among all observers, which in our case is the rest of the senior leadership team. We did this first by observing and grading a lesson which was recorded on video (and purchased online); this is indeed how ISI standardise and train inspectors. I then 'sat in' on the first observation each member of the SLT undertook and we discussed the lesson before they

fed back to the teacher, which gave confidence to the observers as much as to the observed.

The monitoring of teaching and learning is an important oversight role for governors but apart from observing lessons themselves (which is fraught with difficulty in itself) they are dependent on data provided by the Head and SLT. Having access to (anonymised) lesson observation forms and the statistical data is very powerful indeed: saying that 'the mean grade for teaching this term was 1.5, indicating that on average lessons taught are halfway between good and outstanding' is much more meaningful for being rooted in numbers.

Returning to the central theme of performance management, it is a process which, as is widely understood, results in a meeting which reflects upon targets set previously and sets new targets for the year ahead. I wonder how many teachers think on a regular basis about their targets? How much reflection of practice actually happens on a regular basis? These are the challenges for all teachers and school leaders to make performance management not just a compliance hoop through which to jump, but a meaningful way to improve performance and ensure that the educational offering; that is the way in which we can make our schools beacons of excellence and bastions of outstanding teaching and learning.





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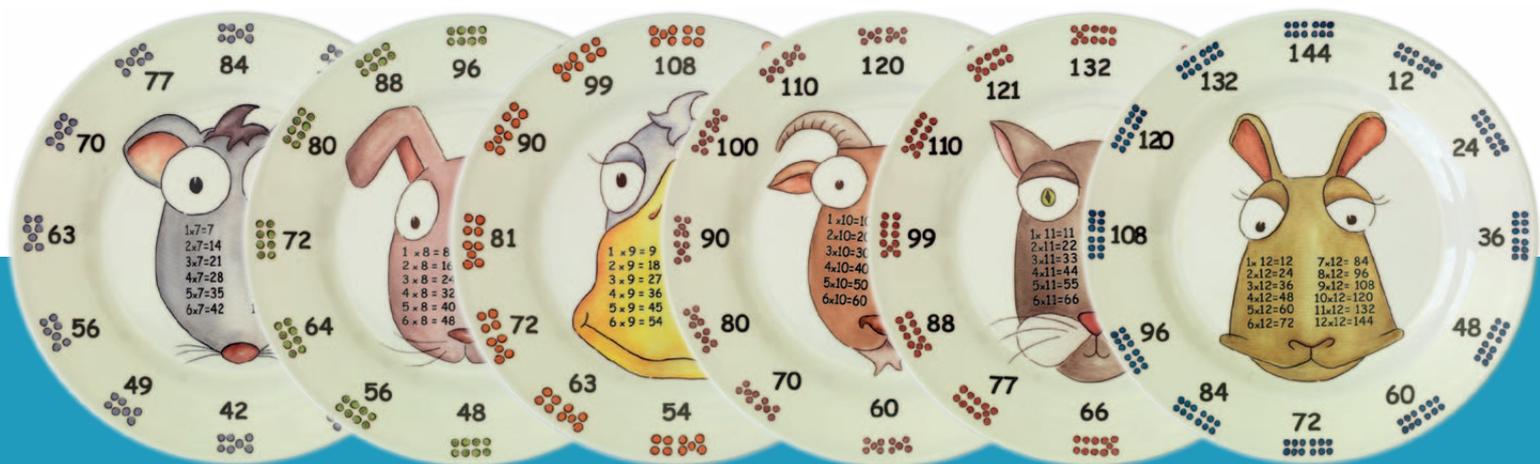
## Head teachers

“ The multiplication plates bowls and tumblers have made a significant contribution to the success of our new lunchtime provision ”

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# Acquiring the skills of leadership

Jeremy Banks, Headmaster at Beachborough, reflects on a first year of Headship

Having accepted my first Headship in December it had been a long building-up to the day I start the role in September. I always imagined that the first year of Headship would pass in a blur and since that first staff meeting on the first day, so it has proved. A wiser person than I had told me that the significant difference between Headship and perhaps any other role in schools was the peaks and troughs of the experience. When it is good, it is magical and on that day when the going is tough, the loneliness of Headship is palpable.

I write this article for those aspiring to Headship that sit and ponder what it will be like come the day. Back in the first few years of my career at a leading London prep school in the mid-1990s I had the most fabulous time learning from some remarkable people who would occasionally bend my ear, telling me my destiny would be as a prep school Headmaster. Flattering at the time, of course, and as my career evolved middle management came and eventually the opportunity of deputy Headship in 2006. The interesting observation looking back on that period was the general lack of out and out leadership opportunity compared to management experience that I was acquiring in bucket loads.

I could sit with a glass of wine in my hand of an evening and articulate my vision for the school of which I would want to be Headmaster – and yet confidently knowing how I would actually achieve it was a challenge.

Enrolling on Buckingham University's Masters in Educational Leadership, endorsed by IAPS, seemed to be a good move for me back in 2009 and I devoured every bit of it, stumbling to a distinction along the way. There has been a lot written of its benefits and I read that it is recognised as 'the premier leadership course for the independent sector'. I quite agree with this as nothing can take greater responsibility for me reaching clarity of mind with respect to my own style of leadership.

## A surge in confidence

Thanks to the content of the course I feel equipped to deliver an outstanding prep school experience with the vision I had always held dear. What I have not read in recent articles is the reminder to everyone that leadership is a skill and it can be acquired, thus balancing a career dominated by management. What happens as those skills are acquired, of course, is that the confidence starts to surge and low and behold – you become the leader, playing the part you have always wanted.

Peter Ireland, Dean of Education at The University of Buckingham, recently suggested that some Head teachers are presiding, rather than leading. What a spectacularly simple point, but crucial to those to whom I write this article. Without a deep understanding and belief in one's own style of leadership, Head teachers could become just a figurehead aimlessly drifting through a career. IAPS schools need to be considerably

better than anything the school down the road has to offer. The pathway for my own school is borne out of this aspiration and gave this article its title. I'm lucky – actually I'm very lucky – and Beachborough thrives so I framed it that we aspire to move from 'good' to 'great'.

## The school down the road

At the heart of all this must be how will we compel learning in our children? How will we embrace different learning styles? How will we cater for the middle-rankers? How will ensure that not a single child falls between the cracks? I could go on, but the point is schools are not about fancy buildings and posh lunches – they are about taking on really important issues and providing real leadership that encourages the loyalty of the staffroom, the governors and the parent body. If IAPS expects us to continue to be better than the school down the road the next set of new Heads should aim to build on all the prep school experiences and opportunities that children and their parents love so much.

Please do not neglect the glossy, traditional prep school feel appreciated by many, but do it all with an icy commitment to your style of leadership. Be authentic in all your actions and firmly place teaching and learning, with a culture of high expectation, at the heart of your first conversation with the Chairman. Good luck.

# A source of inspirational learning

Ben Evans, Headmaster at Edge Grove Prep School in Hertfordshire, says overseas trips can be a wonderful extension to curriculum work



Children of prep school age will develop hugely during an overseas trip, accelerated by external influences and exposure to new cultures, challenges and unfamiliar surroundings. But it is often these radical life experiences that push prep school children right out of their comfort zones that help to nurture independence and boost self-confidence as they learn to adapt and appreciate how different communities live, develop and grow. Are overseas trips an important source of learning for prep school age children? I say yes; and I'll explain exactly why.

Call me biased; travelling is a great passion of mine and one that I believe enriches lives and feeds souls. Living and teaching overseas for six years gave me a great insight into living like a local, adjusting to new cultures and making lasting memories and friendships. Of course, arranging and participating in overseas school trips takes careful planning and preparation but the exposure to new customs and traditions, not to mention exciting sporting and cultural opportunities, can be a wonderful extension to curriculum work.

## **A thirst for adventure**

I've been quite humbled very recently

on a school cricket tour we arranged to Sri Lanka for a group of our prep school boys. The increased levels of maturity that travelling abroad brings out in young children is quite astonishing. It broadens their horizons as the expectation to behave responsibly and confidently is somehow magnified the minute they cross the UK borders. What is remarkable is their natural thirst for discovery and adventure, their ability to adapt and communicate with different nationalities with ease and also to inspire others around them.

It's worth remembering that skills like these can also be harnessed and translated into everyday learning at school. A good teacher can ensure that these skills are retained by the children by encouraging their use in practice. While overseas, children should be given responsibility for wearing clean clothes, for tidying their rooms, speaking to locals to get directions, or to ask for things. They should also be encouraged to question their preconceived views (*ie* the food will be terrible if you're visiting a developing country) – it is interesting to see how these views are altered when they experience the true reality of some of the loveliest food they have ever tasted. Being given responsibility

for being on time and for having the correct equipment are all activities we expect from pupils in the classroom and travelling overseas provides another environment where we can test these skills further.

## **No spoon-feeding**

My biggest piece of advice is don't spoon-feed them; however tempting it might be, allowing children to discover things for themselves and using activities to harvest their understanding of what they have found out via questions, discussion, debate and challenge is all part of the learning curve. Can they justify their thoughts? Can they change their opinion when faced with new evidence? Giving children positions of responsibility when back in school can also help to translate some of what they will have learned overseas.

Something else that has really inspired me is that although children are out of their comfort zones when abroad, it seems that the unknown does seem to bring out the best in their ability to concentrate and focus. Being somewhere completely different engages the mind and most children will try that much harder to succeed. Back at school they can be further inspired as a result of



these experiences and this should be used positively by teachers to raise attainment. The result is that the children will have discovered that by listening properly and trying hard, good things can happen.

### **The world is small**

The nice thing about travelling is that all skills are transferable. I'd also argue that modern life necessitates the acquisition of these skills if you are to succeed in life. The world is actually very small and communication with people of different nationalities is essential as is having an understanding of their cultures. Overseas trips not only engage young minds but the adaptability and ability to react to different circumstances without panic or mental collapse is a formidable skill to have in any workplace environment today.

So, now that you're convinced on the benefits of overseas trips for prep school children, where do you begin? With a big check list and a methodical mind. Planning an overseas trip is time-consuming and can eat into a teachers' free time. Parents are likely to have health and safety concerns, worries about cost, supervision and whether their children are capable of surviving without them for any number of days. It is the schools' job

to answer those questions and to put parents' minds at ease. Some schools also worry about the possible risks or reputational damage that may be caused if a trip doesn't go according to plan. But preparation is the key here, the more you plan, the more water-tight your arrangements and schedule is, the less likely you are to come up against an issue that cannot be resolved easily.

Here are some considerations to get you started:

- Structure – this is the name of the game here. A clear itinerary should be devised, communicated and put in place months in advance of departure.
- Agenda - Everyone should be aware of the activities planned, the travel arrangements, accommodation, meals etc. Free time should be factored into the planning, but for prep school children this needs to be managed carefully as unstructured free time can be disastrous.
- Ratios – Staff to pupil ratios need to be very favourable. Each member of staff should be allocated a group for roll calls, applying sunscreen and acting appropriately in an emergency situation.

- Purpose – Make sure you are clear on the purpose of the trip and whether you really do need to go overseas. Can the same outcome be achieved by staying in the UK?
- Safety – Hugely important. Is the country safe? Have you made a pre-visit first? Are there stringent health and safety precautions and standards (for hotels and transport)? Do you need vaccinations? Book with an ABTA travel agency/tour operator.
- Cost – Is the cost affordable to a sufficient number of parents?

Once you have everything in place you can look forward to a stimulating and rewarding trip that will inspire, educate and liberate all who participate. Overseas trips will develop memories that will last a lifetime. The experiences will also ensure that as adults, pupils will be confident to mix with different personalities and nationalities freely and with ease as they maintain a healthy global perspective on life.

Bon voyage...

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# NSSO: Still in full swing

NSSO is 20 years old. John Madden (ex Dragon School, Oxford) takes over as Artistic Director later this year and writes about Young NSSO, for 8-13-year-olds



When the IAPS Music Courses ceased to exist the National Schools Symphony Orchestra became something akin to an orphan. Founded in 1993 by David Evans, as a continuation orchestra for pupils who had attended those courses, NSSO was suddenly without its progenitor and dependable inflow of talented young players. In such circumstances was born Young NSSO, now in its fourth year, and already grown into a healthy clone of its older sibling.

Young NSSO provides an annual, high quality residential course for young orchestral musicians, aged 8-13 years old. It adopts the NSSO hallmark mixture of individual instrumental coaching by experienced professional tutors, with playing in smaller ensembles, sectional and full rehearsals, culminating in a final concert, this year at the Malvern Theatre.

The essence of the week's course is the balance between concentrated music practice and a hugely enjoyable programme of sport, activities and entertainment. Pupils gain a lot beyond the music; developing the social skills needed to benefit from a week long residential course. Young NSSO lays the best possible foundation for the enjoyment of orchestral music and is a 'must' for those who love playing.

Admission to the orchestra is by audition and the general standard is from about ABRSM grade four upwards. Music reading skills need to be well developed for youngsters to benefit most from the week. A particular strength of being a member of Young NSSO is the progression offered into NSSO itself. This year the main orchestra is playing Holst The Planets – which is proving quite an inspiration to our younger players who hope to join NSSO in the future. Musical ability is the only criterion for admission and we have a number of means tested bursaries to help those who would find the course fees prohibitive.

Keith Slade has conducted Young NSSO since its founding and we have benefited from his infectious enthusiasm and wide experience of working with young players. This year he and the orchestra



will be joined by actor Adam Astill – a well know face on British TV – as narrator in John Dankworth's jazz inspired Tom Sawyer's Saturday and John William's iconic score to Jurassic Park. Instrumental coaches are drawn from around the UK; the pastoral staff have extensive boarding experience in the independent sector, and all have child protection (DBS) clearance.

This year there are still some places available for the course at Malvern College (13-20 July) but if the summer holiday is already booked, next year's course will be the same week (12-19 July, 2015) and in the same venue! Young NSSO is housed at The Downs, Malvern's prep school, which is a delightful venue, safely tucked away in Colwell, just a stone's throw from the main NSSO course at the college. The parallel courses are ideal for brothers and sisters at differing stages of musical development.

Beyond Malvern, NSSO and Young NSSO sit comfortably in the panoply of such national organisations, offering an important bridge to those who aspire to membership of NYO. But our single annual residential course is often a better fit for those talented pupils with wide-ranging interests and commitments, for whom music is important but not necessarily a career or higher education goal.

Committing to a week-long residential course is a big decision, especially for

day children in this age group. By way of an introduction to the organisation NSSO runs one-day taster courses for 8-13-year-olds during the academic year in various venues around the country. Pupils come for a busy day of music making and activity run by the staff who will be coaching at the summer course. There is a parents' meeting (with NSSO trustees and officers) and a helpful Q&A session as well as a short concert at the end of the day, all offering something of the flavour of the NSSO experience.

What could be better than spending a week in excellent accommodation, set in some of England's finest countryside, working in superb facilities and making music to the highest possible level, with brilliant musical and pastoral staff? The NSSO and Young NSSO experience is all of these things and over 1000 alumni can testify to enduring friendships fostered in boarding houses and playing fields as well as in the rehearsal room.

But do not trust the hyperbole, come and find out for yourself. Directors of Music are invited to attend the final concert on Sunday 20th July as guests of the Trustees.

For tickets, further information about the course, taster days and bursaries, a brochure or application form, please contact [johnmadden@nssso.org](mailto:johnmadden@nssso.org)

# The life of Pi

Gemma Mitchell, head of maths at St Hilary's in Godalming, shares a way of making maths exciting – through Pi

As practitioners we are always striving to make maths exciting and engaging. Preparatory schools are never stationary, sedate establishments: they are full of dynamism, and consequently there is a tension between creating imaginative and vibrant 'off timetable days' at the expense of other subjects.

However, we still want to ensure that pupils have these amazing learning opportunities to enrich and deepen their understanding. As a head of department, I often feel these pressures and so wanted to embrace Pi Day and guarantee a high impact on pupils with a low effect on teaching staff. The result was a unique learning experience.

Practical ideas and assembling a 'tool box' of stimulating and motivating activities in which pupils will make excellent progress is one of the many goals outstanding practitioners aspire to have. As with all articles, I am continually looking for ideas that inspire me and that I can use in my own classroom so I hope that this article will provide lots of interest with practical activities and encourage further topics to explore.

According to a review in the *New York Times* last year: 'Nearly 90 percent of high school graduates say they're not interested in a career or a college major involving science, technology, engineering or math, known collectively as STEM.'

A passion for this subject can only come through exciting and insightful lessons that create a buzz and desire to want to learn more. So let's embrace these special days with our pupils.

Pi Day is celebrated on March 14th around the world. Pi (Greek letter " $\pi$ ") is the symbol used in mathematics to represent a constant — the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter — which is approximately 3.14159. From Early Year to Key Stage Two and beyond this day can be used as a significant event to promote mathematics. We know that through the manipulation of real life objects, the stimulation of visual and auditory clues can enable learners to engage, feel motivated and have the 'buzz' factor.

## 'Wow' factor

Having that 'Wow' factor as soon as children arrive into the classroom sets the tone for an exciting lesson. In Early Years, the focus to do with pi centered on shapes, and more specifically circles. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLXnXf6FSq8> provides an upbeat piece of music in which children have to move and draw shapes in the air, resulting in their imagination being immediately captured. Wassily Kandinsky's circles are an excellent stimulus for reflecting upon shapes and further images can be found readily on the Tate gallery links and Sparklebox.

Using the outside grounds is another mathematical opportunity just waiting to happen. Inviting the children to become shape hunters and detect 'real-life' examples links with the Early Years Foundation framework in terms of mathematics as well as understanding of the world. For the older pupils, chalks on the playground, tape measures and calculators provides them with the

tools to create their own circles and solve pi questions.

We know that pupils learn first by handling objects in the real world in the Early Years, then by drawing pictorial representations before using the mathematical symbols as they progress through Key stage One and Two. The initial thought of sharing pi with younger pupils was a little daunting until I realised was was achievable. Initially, the exposure to the new mathematical vocabulary was essential. Peter Weatherall's circles song and animation, and <http://www.transum.org/software/> provide two excellent resources as children arrive. A first-rate starter can also be found in a memory pi challenge.

## 'That's magic!'

Just by using string and circular shapes from around the classroom, as well as pizza bases, plates and cups, children can record their findings of the relationship between the circumference and diameter. One pupil looked up at me and said, 'That's magic! It has worked for every single circle. The circumference is about three times the diameter!' She was even more thrilled when she found it was also the case for the huge magnetic doughnut she had brought in. With pupils of any age, edibles always supply that added stimulation – particularly if they involve chocolate. By scaffolding the learning and applying it to children of different ages and abilities all pupils are able to celebrate Pi Day. The older pupils were able to use their calculator skills and find the circumference of different



circles as well as the area. The more able pupils had to explore finding the area of sectors, and while all focusing on the giant cookies in front of them!

Whilst Year 3 pupils then explored the circumference of circles on a given drawing of 'circular teddies', the older pupils were invited to create their own circle of teddy bears and practice their compass skills. Obviously, such a focus on shape can open a whole plethora of activities including catchphrase plenaries focusing on area and perimeter, collective memory games and the use of a selection of pi-rich problems.

In Key Stage Two, there are many cross-curricular links to be had including writing pi-kus and, of course, sharing Cindy Neuchwandars wonderful books *Sir Cumference* and *the Dragon of Pi* and *Sir Cumference and the First Round table*. Through music (<http://avoision.com/experiments/pi10k>) children can try to convert the first ten thousand digits of pi into a sequence.

Design technology also has its role to play on Pi day. Pi necklaces are an excellent way to demonstrate irrational numbers. Indeed, pupils could make their own beads or use recycled buttons and sequins as an eco-initiative. Finally, there is the golden opportunity to weigh and bake pies.

### Pi and pie

In writing this, I should remind you that the idea was essentially for the pupils to embrace Pi Day and have an understanding of what it is and why we can celebrate it, whilst not impacting on any other subjects. So, although there is an opening for further development besides maths lessons, there seemed only one other occasion during the school day when staff and pupils could still retain their normal duties and routine – lunchtime. This small period enabled both pi and pie to become one! For the younger children during their lunch they had shapes and picture mats on their tables. They had to place the correct shapes onto the pictures.

The images ranged from dinosaurs to boats, flowers and trains. The older pupils were invited to sit in their houses. Each house had the same mathematical questions and puzzles laid on their tables. The challenge was to complete as many as they could during the course of dinner service in order to be awarded the math house trophy. As all mathematics teachers know, showing your workings is key and having a place to do jottings is essential – so the tablecloths became this space.

Finally, I'd like to wish readers a very belated Happy Pi Day! I hope that next year there will be many prep schools fighting out a mathematical challenge or two whilst eating their lunch and battling for a house cup.

# Is your playground summer-ready?

Gary Bridge, Installations Manager at Sovereign Play Equipment, gives his expert advice on equipment maintenance for a safe play environment



The maintenance and inspection of play equipment is a compulsory preventative measure – and with summer just around the corner and pupils choosing to spend break times in the sunshine, now is the time to inspect your existing play equipment.

From ropes and wooden frames to nuts and bolts, there are a large number of components on play equipment that require routine checks and an annual inspection. If maintained correctly, any potential risks (including any debris, loose nuts, bolts or fixings and corrosion) can be spotted at an early stage and addressed immediately.

A survey by the Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) found that the majority of respondents were aware that play areas and play equipment should have a detailed and documented operational inspection by a suitably competent person. However, only around a quarter of those surveyed said that someone from their local authority conducted the inspection, and less than a quarter said a qualified RPII inspector did the inspection. More than a third of respondents indicated that the only inspection or maintenance carried out was by their school caretaker or site manager. This implies that many people believe the responsibility for maintenance and inspection is that of the school and not necessarily of a suitably qualified person.

Maintaining equipment differs from company to company, but always ask for the play provider's after-care manual and read it thoroughly. On a recent visit to a school playground, I saw that its three-year-old equipment was taped up and out of use. The structure had not been maintained according to the company's small print, which stated that it had to be painted on a regular basis. As a result, the warranty had been made null and void, much to the disappointment of the school.

I would advise looking for tanalised, pressure treated timbers and where possible avoid painted woods, as these will always require costly ongoing maintenance.

Maintenance procedures are also designed to ensure playing surfaces are clean and give consistent performance. To meet these objectives, it's advisable to do the following:

- Visually inspect the play surface every five to seven days
- Remove grass cuttings, weed spores and other detritus from the surface
- Brush the surface to prevent any tendency to form an impervious skin on the surface that may impair drainage
- Ensure appropriate footwear is worn on the surface (no high heels)
- Inspect the surface for signs of damage and arrange remedial repairs promptly.

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# Natural-born scientists

Dr Phillip Hoskin, housemaster and chemistry teacher at Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School, explains why it is vital to develop and nurture scientific curiosity, with specialist science teachers from as young as Year 3

Children are natural-born scientists. They're curious about the world around them, ask lots of questions, and love the process of discovery. This inquisitiveness and eagerness to explore is a fantastic basis for turning children on to science.

Having the confidence to put on a white coat, goggles and experiment at school has been in the news recently. The importance of experiments in school science is under scrutiny, but Brunel University's Vice-Chancellor Professor Julia Buckingham says that practical work should not be an add-on. "It is an integral part of science and encourages children to question, to explore – it excites them."

At Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School, we are in a position of strength because children from Year 3 are taught by specialists with industry experience and post-graduate experience.

What difference does it make to have science teachers who have industry experience? Most pupils in most schools enter a lab for the first time in Year 7. Ours start in Year 3. Whether it's dissections, explosions or building cities of Lego and lighting it up with series and parallel circuits, the experience we bring makes the subject relevant. We draw parallels with commercial science and the real world and we look to nurture natural inquisitiveness. When I was

studying chemistry I had no idea why it mattered; I just enjoyed it. Whereas, our pupils recognise that the skills they acquire will, ultimately, be applicable in a commercial setting.

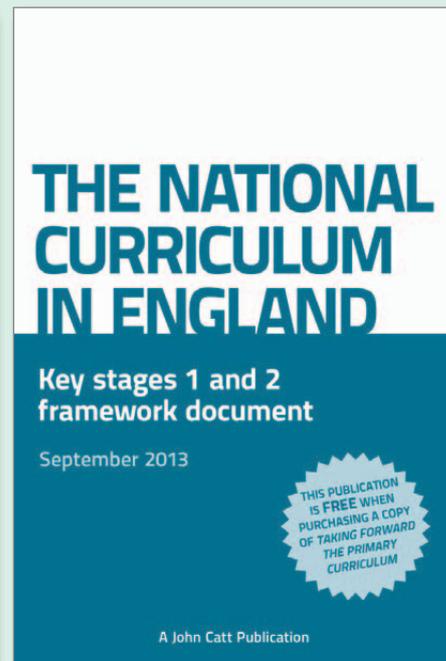
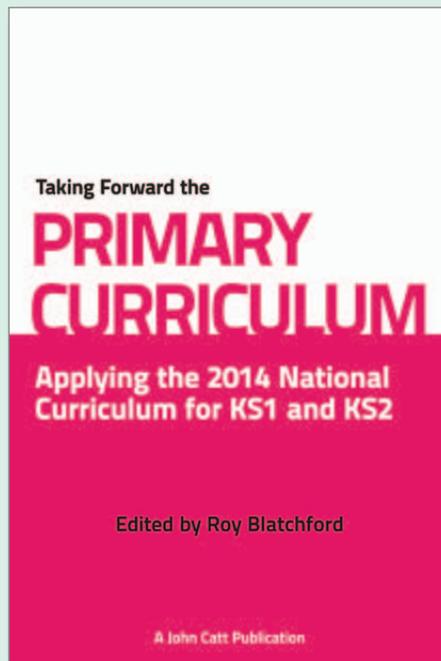
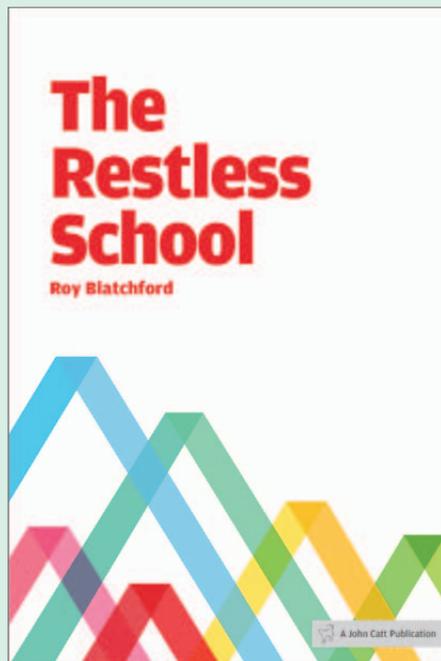
Research projects have included the synthesis of aspirin and the production of esters. The preparation of this particular drug was prompted by my years at Bayer as a process development chemist. During this period, I worked in the Hoffmann laboratories where aspirin was first produced. Our Year 8 pupils not only made this analgesic drug but also presented their research to an audience, which included sixth form chemists. The production of esters gave our Year 8 pupils an insight into the speciality chemicals sector (fragrances and flavourings).

I have had published articles in leading scientific journals and my links with the Cavendish laboratories at Cambridge University and Durham University, and GlaxoSmithKline, Bayer and AstraZeneca, have provided opportunities for the prep school pupils once they have progressed to Sedbergh School. My colleague, Faye Barker, a biologist, brings experience of working as an intern at the World Health Organisation in Geneva and work with UN agencies, Ministers for Health, Education and NGOs to her teaching.

Chemists need to have both a sound theoretical and practical grasp of the subject; ideally, this should also be underpinned by a good understanding







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of mathematics, physics and biology. Chemistry teaching must reflect this, along with considerable emphasis on developing core practical skills from an early age. Here, we cover the CE syllabus, but we are not shackled by its narrow confines and thus we cover an awful lot more. This approach, ultimately, equips our pupils with all of the requisite practical skills used up to and including Year 12.

I regularly draw parallels with school and commercial science in lessons. For example, my pupils appreciate that the methods used to grow crystals of copper sulphate are equally applicable to controlling the dimensions of biologically active compounds. The chromatography of leaves or sweets can also be used as a method in forensics and drug-testing in sport. My approach also ensures that our pupils are given an insight into the various job opportunities within the science industries at an early age.

It is this question of age that is so

important. The Cardiff University award-winning spinout company, Science Made Simple, is a recipient of the National Science Academy, designed to support STEM education in Wales. Dr Hayley Gomez, an astrophysicist, a director of this company, says: “We now know that the way young children think is very similar to the way a scientist thinks, primary children like to test why things happen in an informal way and learn from watching and listening, linking different things together.”

We introduce young children to the idea that being a scientist isn't just about sitting in a lab all day. To be a great scientist you need creativity and imagination to be able to ask interesting questions and find new ways of solving problems. Scientists also need to communicate their findings with other people, whether by writing, drawing pictures or diagrams, or even by going on TV.

Our pupils also have the advantage

of instant access to superb fieldwork sites in the beautiful woods, streams and fields surrounding the school, and indoor learning from Year 3 could be in any one of six state-of-the-art laboratories. We have an abundance of glassware including quick-fit apparatus, and a chemical inventory that rivals any leading senior school's facilities. Children of all ages love to walk down the fabulous glass corridor where work and models are displayed. Investment in science at a young age is not only vital for schools; it is vital for the future generation of scientists and must begin early.

Echoing advice from the Royal Society's 'Invigorate' website, which aims to bring science to life, we find that when children are allowed to experience the practical side of the subject it is great fun, and we know that having the confidence to experiment from a young age impacts significantly on success and motivation up to A level and beyond.

# A 'call to arms' for th



Independent schools face the extraordinary challenge of the rise of the 'educational consumer' – parents who know what they want and expect value for their money. In this introduction to his book *Lifting Our Heads*, Alex McGrath, Head of King's Ely Senior, asks in a time of austerity, how can we continue to deliver the best education money can buy?

In the spring of 2013 I was asked to undertake some consultancy work for a company that supplied schools. The task was to interview school leaders – predominantly Heads – and then produce an independent report about the market insight I had acquired.

I travelled throughout England, interviewing Heads at their schools. It was a privilege to see them in their own environment. These were my friends and colleagues, affording me their time because of the rare opportunity to discuss something of mutual concern. What struck me as I delved into their perspectives about the supplier was how it shed light on so many other aspects of the world of independent schools. I was told about attitudes to different service providers, the varied processes by which schools implemented major change, the values tied up with branding, and presentation of the school both beyond its gates and within. I began to gain a real insight into Heads' perceptions of costs, not only for the school, but also for the parents. What began as a simple exercise in eliciting information about attitudes to a product had become a revelation of everything in schools from liaison with parents, communication, marketing, pupil attitudes, cultural history, attitudes of alumni, and the possibilities for schools in exploring alternative income streams. Following our discussions, many of these Heads were delighted to show me around, and to talk with pride about new initiatives, developments, buildings, and the wonderful teaching and learning that was going on in their schools.

I came away with the material for my report, which was

duly delivered, but most importantly with the insight gained from talking with a variety of Heads in a focused way about things which really mattered to them and to their schools. I was also gaining an impression that providing value for money to parents in terms of what they received from the school as a whole was of paramount importance. I decided that this was something which was worth exploring further.

At first, I thought that there might be a useful article for a magazine, such as this one. I had also really enjoyed speaking with colleagues in a variety of schools, and wanted to extend the range of interviews to include more school Heads. I therefore went back to some of the original schools, and also added more. I wanted to know whether value for money was the most important issue affecting independent schools today, and how we could ensure that we maintain our high standards and integrity while remaining competitive in tumultuous economic and political times. As I spoke with colleagues, I realised that there was sufficient material here for more than just a magazine article (and this led to the publication of my book, *Lifting Our Heads*). I became concerned that the UK independent education sector was in danger, and that a more substantial examination of the issues would be beneficial. However, I was also encouraged that these schools had endured, in some cases for over a thousand years, and had faced threats in the past with adaptability, strength and guile. I had faith in the schools to succeed. This was because I had faith in the schools themselves.

# The independent sector



At the end of 2012 I had explored the possibility of a move overseas, and had been offered a job as Principal of a British school abroad. It was very exciting, and the whole family were in many senses geared towards upping sticks and sharing an adventure, learning a new language, and revelling in an international educational setting. However, I had a nagging doubt. The job was excellent. Remuneration was excellent. The people who I would be working with were excellent. I just felt a sense of dissatisfaction. I also had applied for a Headship in a British school. I had my first interview at King's Ely and knew that I had to reject the overseas opportunity. The school was an exciting place to be, within a network of super international partner schools. But it was not a UK independent school. It did not have the range of opportunity, the excellence of teaching, or the sheer quality which I found at Ely. With three children of my own to consider, the choice came down to what I wanted as a parent, and that was a UK independent school. I had not been offered the Ely job at that point, but I withdrew from the overseas post.

I wanted *Lifting Our Heads* to be an encouragement, and a 'call to arms' for the UK independent sector. We have extraordinary schools which are the envy of the world. UK independent education is a successful export, bringing enormous numbers of overseas students to our universities and schools. A rapidly-growing explosion of fee-paying schools have been set up abroad with a British curriculum, and seeking to hire British-trained, English-speaking teachers, and yet our independent schools are assailed here in the UK by the very politicians who promote our schools overseas.

I believe that it is time we acknowledged our challenges, and faced them. Schools of our enduring quality will survive and thrive, but we cannot be complacent in the face of severe political and economic pressures. The biggest danger of excellence is complacency, or a refusal to acknowledge that danger is around the corner.

So *Lifting Our Heads* is a call to arms, and stems from a belief in the quality of our schools. However, we need to be brutally honest with ourselves, too. We are very conservative institutions, and do not embrace change readily. What my research and experience tell me is

that there is a distant rumbling which tells of a sudden avalanche of change which will affect us all in the not-too-distant future, and is beginning to affect us now. We cannot afford to bury our heads in the sand. We must listen to what our Heads are saying. Meanwhile we must do all that we can to celebrate our quality offering, working together across associations and developing practical strategies to adapt in order to preserve some of the best schools in the world.



*Lifting Our Heads*, by Alex McGrath, is published by John Catt Educational. ISBN: 978 1 908095 98 5. £12.99.  
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# Boarding in the 21st Century

Mike Crossley, Headmaster and Head of Boarding at Taverham Hall Preparatory School, shares his reflections on modern boarding

Boarding numbers at Taverham Hall Preparatory School are increasing. For a stand alone prep school which operates on a largely five-day week, flexi boarding, certainly appears to be the way forward. If a school is unable to offer a full boarding model it would be well advised to devise a boarding programme which suits busy families who then have the opportunity to spend the weekends together. Many of our families have children involved in club sport, drama and music and this flexi model gives them the best of both worlds.

## Choice and flexibility to provide additional family support

To meet the complex demands of 21st century parents, Taverham Hall offer choice and flexibility in the length of day options through their after-school clubs, evening meals and weekly/flexible boarding options for its pupils.

In the school's familiar, caring and supportive environment, boarding experience is particularly valuable as preparation for boarding in senior schools. Certain boarding staff (including myself and my family) 'live-in', so that children never need to look far for a little individual attention.

Perhaps surprisingly most of our boarders live within a ten-mile radius of the school. Those living locally often take advantage of flexi boarding and taster night options to see for themselves what boarding offers. For parents who find themselves with unexpected work commitments it can be a helpful addition to their support network. There are schools who expect pupils to commit to the same slots week-on-week but for a school to offer a truly flexi boarding system this seems a little rigid, unless places or spaces are so limited that this is the only way of securing a bed.

Weekly boarders are able to board from Monday morning at breakfast time until Friday afternoon. Returning on a Sunday evening is worth exploring but only if there solid core of pupils wishing to take this option, otherwise the organisation and lack of numbers can make this barely worthwhile. The four-night boarding week is particularly popular with families who might otherwise face a long

daily commute and it enables their child to participate in boarding life during the week instead of having to endure long car journeys.

At Taverham Hall boarders range in age from 7 to 13-years-old. There are schools who offer this option at Year 2 but this certainly provides additional challenges. In my experience friendships are forged across the years and in smaller schools in particular, the natural instinct for older children to look out for the younger ones is encouraged. Respect for each other's differences and needs come naturally in such a close-knit community. Regular boarders' forums ensure everyone is able to contribute to the community. These forums are chaired by the House Parent but we also enlist the help of senior staff and our independent listener, who happens to be local vicar.

## Link with home

Boarders are encouraged on daily basis to speak to their parents should they so wish and their parents are able to follow what has been happening within the boarding community via the news posts on the school's website. There will always be the debate as to 'how often is too often' and whether boarders should be bringing in mobile phones. In this day and age, claiming that boarders do not need mobile phones is likely to evoke emotive responses from both parents and pupils. A sensible compromise would seem to be limiting and monitoring their use.

## Vibrancy and stimulation

Boarding facilities emulate the changes in family lifestyles over the past decades. Dormitories now need to consist of bright, cheerful rooms, packed with family photos, pictures and games. Pupils enjoy a personal space to make their own and no two dorms are the same. Personal duvet covers and keepsakes help children to develop a sense of identity while maintaining an important link with home. Relaxation is important too. Cosy corners stuffed with cushions and sofas, TVs, DVD players and music systems allow for that all-important down-time.



Life as a boarder is full. After homework/prep is completed each day boarding staff offer exciting and varied programmes for those who board. We still use teaching staff to assist with the boarding and this is done on a rota. This helps demonstrate that boarding is very much a part of school life and not simply an add-on. Those staff who invest in the boarding community are rewarded with children who genuinely look forward to that particular member of staff's turn on the rota. Children often enjoy relaxing in the school's extensive stunning woodland grounds with activities such as den building, tree climbing and all sorts of outdoor games. To an extent this is dependent on the weather, but only to a degree. Barbecues are favoured in the summer while karaoke and dressing up in the dorms and hide-and-seek in the grounds are popular activities all year round. Theme nights and outings add another dimension to what boarders are able to get involved in. In addition they have access to the wide range of school facilities such as the ICT room, sports hall, music block, swimming pool, art room, table tennis, table football, sports fields etc.

### Confidence and independence

As a result of experience in the boarding environment it is my belief that those pupils' confidence and independence grow naturally. They take increased responsibility for their learning and conduct, as well as obtaining leadership roles within the school. Older pupils, in general, are given the opportunity to work more closely with teachers and a sense of pride in their learning and conduct is fostered. The ability of older pupils to mentor younger pupils is encouraged and for those who excel in these areas, the role

of prefect comes naturally in Year 8. By the age of 13, our boarders emerge as well-mannered, confident, friendly and interesting young people, comfortable in their ability to articulate their opinions and feelings and well equipped to embrace the next stage of their education as empowered learners full of confidence and enthusiasm.

Our latest ISI inspection tends to agree: 'The quality of boarding education is excellent; no effort is spared to ensure that it is a positive and enriching experience which contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. The boarders relate very well to one another and to their house staff.' ISI inspection report November 2010.

Ofsted is of a similar view: 'Pupils are provided with an excellent level of care and pastoral support. They are cared for by staff who know them well; their views are sought and they feel listened to. The school provides pupils with a safe and nurturing environment and an extensive programme of activities that contributes to their social and self-help skills. Boarders receive an outstanding level of pastoral care across the school community.'

In May 2011 Ofsted inspected the school's social care and boarding environment which was rated 'Outstanding'.

In conclusion, I have little doubt that vibrant boarding staff make all the difference in the world. Our gap students also play a key role being invariably able to relate to the children in a way that perhaps teachers are unable to do. The combination seems to work very well.

For children who reside with us, boarding is more than just a place to sleep. Here at Taverham Hall School it is a world of warmth, adventure, friendship and independence. Put simply, it's home-from-home.

# Harnessing the power of curiosity

World history author Christopher Lloyd explains that knowing a little about how the brain has evolved over three million years can help a lot with pupil engagement in the classroom



Photography: Jeff Gilbert

Almost every other day I am giving lectures and workshops in schools about the history of the world – many of them prep schools – and sitting on the floor in front of me are hundreds of the most fascinating, stimulating and remarkable creations of all time: human brains.

Whenever I address such a group young people I am witness to the

ultimate learning experience myself – what is that makes these minds curious and, even more interestingly, what happens when sometimes they switch off?

Brains are designed around curiosity. When a baby is born it is fired by such a curiosity about the world around it that it learns to talk, walk and socialise – three of the most

profoundly complicated but important life skills – without any kind of formal tuition involving schools or teachers. The acquisition of impressions through the senses, and the processing of information into a series of images, metaphors and internal narratives, results in fragments of disparate data being connected into something called experience.

A child cannot be born bored. Medics would quickly classify a newly minted brain lacking the instinct to explore, discover and learn as having a brain disorder, – a disease of the mind.

Yet by the time many children reach the age of 14 or 15, how often do we hear complaints about hating history, Latin, or maths? When I give my science talks I always ask (a little provocatively, perhaps) ‘Who hates maths?’ I promise you on average 85% of the pupils in the room raise their hands. Why? They find it boring!

So what’s happens? What makes a young precious brain go from naturally curious to dysfunctionally bored? And what can be done to minimise the chances of such disasters happening?

A basic appreciation of how the human brain has evolved to learn is where, I believe, the answers can be found. In the three-million year period of the Stone Ages, two attributes emerge that distinguish modern humans from their close biological relatives, chimpanzees, with whom we share an astonishing 98% similarity in terms of our DNA. One big difference is the size of our brains (about four times larger), the other is that we walk on two feet (giving us freely available hands).

There is no one theory that explains the dramatic increase in brain size (I have counted about 17 rival theories so far). The most convincing, though, concerns hand-to-eye co-ordination. Those ancestors of ours who learned to make the most precise tools for hunting animals and butchering hides were the most likely to father the most children, creating a selective pressure in favour of excellence in hand-to-eye co-ordination – *ie*, bigger brains with better processing capacity.

Our brains are therefore hard-wired to learn through using our hands – through craft. Look at a toddler at the moment just before she has the courage to take her first unaided steps. What does she do? She has to have the courage to let go with her hands.

Second, modern humans (unlike most other mammals) choose their

mates not according to a sense of smell but through visual recognition. To appreciate this, think back to the origins of mammals in the age of dinosaurs. Our mammal ancestors had to hunt at night to keep out of harm’s way – hence warm bloodedness, fur and, crucially, an ability seek things out in the dark – which is where a sense of smell, not sight, reigns supreme (except for bats which ingeniously use sound).

My dog Flossie has a sense of smell 1000 times better than me, which is astonishing for a creature whose brain is about 10 times smaller.

But humans do not judge the goodness or badness of something in the same way that a dog sniffs a stranger by its bottom. Instead, we use visual recognition set against the deviation of an object or person from the standard average in any given population. Pick up a carrot in the supermarket: if it fails the symmetry test, you will most likely put it back. We judge people the same way, at least to begin with. If I have a boil on the left side of my face and the right side has a scissor shaped scar, I will be considered ugly – regardless of how sweet-smelling I may also happen to be.

Why? It’s probably down to a viral infection four million years ago which knocked out part of our olfactory system. As a result our lineage compensated for its poor sense of smell by using visual recognition – based on colour and symmetry – as a way for making life’s vital value judgements. As it happens, such visual judgement requires more processing power, another theory for why our brains are bigger. Unlike dogs, cats and bats, we are hard-wired as a visual species.

An appreciation of our Stone Age past can help an awful lot when it comes to understating effective ways of addressing pupils in the classroom and avoiding the mental doldrums. Feed a young curious mind with a diet made mostly of abstractions such as words and numbers (totally alien to the hard-wired brain; they never existed in the story of human evolution) and it should come as no surprise that the brain ceases to function as it

should. Numeracy and literacy, when handled without the tonic of craft and visualisation, can easily turn natural curiosity into mindless boredom.

Instead we should promote craft, drama and pictures across every subject discipline at every available opportunity. I promise you the response will be like sailing downstream as opposed to rowing uphill.

I use visual timelines, 1000 pictures to tell the story of the history of the world in a fold out wallbook. I take a giant version into school – it is 8m long – as a backdrop to make visual connections that appeal to our innate desire to make our own narratives through knowledge.

I also use a coat of brightly coloured pockets, each one with a physical object inside that is linked in some way to one of the most amazing stories in the history of the world. Together the pupils pick my pockets and we construct our own narratives through time. This is cross-curricular, visual, tactile learning. Moreover, the inherently visual nature of this approach makes it so much more memorable, a sure sign that these techniques maximise the brain’s natural learning facilities. When we dream, and the brain sorts out what to remember and what to forget, it does so pictures not words or numbers.

So I will never tire of giving talks and workshops to pupils in schools simply because I am constantly learning so much about the most fascinating instrument of all – the human brain.

Christopher Lloyd offers his *What on Earth?* talks for prep school pupils on history, science, nature, sport and Shakespeare. He also offers INSET workshops for teachers on neuroscience and cross-curricular integration. Visit [www.whatonearthbooks.com/events](http://www.whatonearthbooks.com/events) for more details or email [chris@whatonearthbooks.com](mailto:chris@whatonearthbooks.com)

# No time for coffee

Penny Whitwell makes the case for tutors

Wake up, commute, registration, go.

It's a fast start to the day in the life of a teacher and the pace rarely gets any slower. With lesson after lesson filled with bright young things, eager to get their word in, their question in or to voice their confusion. Finally break time is time to take five. Or is it?

More and more, break is not used to actually stop, kick back and check in with colleagues, but seen rather as an opportunity to meet with a pupil, phone a parent or squeeze in an extra play rehearsal. As teachers, our vocation is to guide every child and to answer their educational needs in as personable and personalised way as possible. The question is often not how to achieve this ideal, but when. With time stretched as it is, tutors can play a useful role.

Why not lean on them? Wherein lies the concern? There could be some pride at stake, as a school, particularly a fee-paying school, feels responsible for every angle of an academic education. Already though, children naturally seek guidance with their studies from parents, siblings and peers; teachers provide the lion's share but the support team outside school is important.

So, why the antagonism towards tutors? Do we love to hate tutors full stop or, really, just love to hate disruptive tutors? We growl at the ones that throw a spanner in the works by teaching the very exercise we had planned to do that day or by going over the past paper that was lined up for the mock exam. This tutor might be the young lad fresh out of university trying his hand at something new. It may be the chic French native who feels – *sans doute* – that she can teach the language.

We teachers all appreciate that there's

a difference between knowing your subject and knowing how to teach. An understanding of the classroom is essential. How can you tutor if you have never taught?

Let's not forget then that many tutors have already taught. Many are qualified teachers with considerable experience who are simply no longer in the classroom. Perhaps they are juggling the demands of a growing family or have relocated and are between jobs. Whatever the reason, there is a wealth of expert tutors ready to support children in their learning and therefore teachers in their teaching. They understand where children are coming from, where parents are coming from and, indeed, where schools are coming from.

When is there a real need for a tutor?

Let us consider the quiet child; the quiet child and the anxious child are often one and the same. In battling back the demands of the loud child, what a relief that there are some quiet children in the class. Indeed, for the unassuming child, the worst thing of all would be to be singled out, asked, 'Do you understand?' or, panic, 'Could you give us an example, Charlie?'

Cheeks red, mouth dry, mind utterly blank, as teachers, we wouldn't let Charlie suffer for too long before moving on to someone else. For these children, it can feel too embarrassing to ask for an explanation in class, better to try to work it out at home with no one looking or judging. No-one wants to be singled out as the one who doesn't get it, victim to tooth sucking, jeering or worse as the playground comes into the classroom. Maybe someone has asked that question before but you were daydreaming and can't be sure. Why risk sticking your neck out just in case?

There's nothing worse than feeling that you are alone to battle through the equations, the verbs and the incomprehensible comprehensions. The teacher can be the last person a child will want to ask for help; will it go on the report? Change a grade? Tip the balance and force me into the set below?

In the best scenario, of course, the teacher is the first and most obvious person to approach, but is 10 minutes at break time or after school enough? Children need a break; adults need a break. Where does the extra pocket of time come from? A tutor can bridge the gap between home and school. Nothing is assumed, no question is too silly, there is no audience and, importantly, there is no rush. Confidence is such a hard thing to grow; the confidence to ask for help is the first step in a positive learning experience. If a child benefits from the more impartial help of a tutor, a tutor makes sense.

Then there's the child who has flown in from a far-off land with an alternative syllabus, a tough one to square in the early days. This could be the New Yorker or the boy returning from Hong Kong, familiar enough locations. How brilliant to encourage diversity in a school and welcome children who have spent time experiencing a different country and culture. What better and more natural way to promote an international perspective in our young people than through a classroom melting pot of different nationalities? Intolerances dissolve in the level playing field of school, through sport, music and common academic goals. Children learn to get on with a wide diversity of characters, regardless of nationality.

All lovely for the long term, however, in terms of the here and now,



compared with our highly specialized prep school program, their education has been worlds apart: Year 7 with no Latin for starters and only a modicum of singing and dancing in French. There are often significant gaps to fill and a limited amount of time before those 13+ Common Entrance exams. How many extra slots can really be found in lunch times and after school? How straightforward is it for specialist teachers to prioritize setting up an accelerated program of study for one individual? Stress levels soar at the very thought: the stress levels of the child, the teachers and, of course, the parents. A tutor makes sense.

Finally, let us consider the child who wants success, more than that, this child wants to be the very best that he can possibly be, to exceed expectations and to soar high. Why not? If the motivation is there, encourage it. Our increasingly competitive world starts with an increasingly competitive classroom; 11+ and 13+ entrance exams are only the beginning. They are hungry, they know which public school they want to go to and set their sights on it, indeed, for some, this is the only acceptable path in their mind and, rightly or wrongly, it appears that their future depends on it. This is too tough a mountain to climb alone. A tutor makes sense.

Children can be taken so far in school but it is a difficult road for those needing a little extra. A tutor can be a brilliantly valuable resource and work wonders to buoy up a student, to fill any gaps and to prep them for success every step of the way.

As in any profession, there are the good, the less good and then the downright excellent. Celebrate excellence in tutoring and, teachers, have that coffee at break.

Penny Whitwell is the founder  
of Prep School Tutors.  
[www.prepschooltutor.co.uk](http://www.prepschooltutor.co.uk)

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# Learning while dining

Times Tables Plates are helping children master multiplication and division

When Jo Clancy, a teacher at Cumnor House School in Sussex, drew a plump old owl on to a plate, put a times table over it, and showed it to her daughter, she couldn't for one minute have believed the effect it was going to have on the future lives of so many children around the world.

Her daughter, and the children in her class, were entranced. So Jo and her husband drew another couple of characters with two other times tables and found they had created a mealtime game for them all. They were learning whilst playing, both at school and at home, and were subconsciously remembering numbers that they would be useful to them for every single day of their lives.

Jo found that all the children become involved, even those that previously had no interest whatsoever in learning their tables. There was a lot of interaction and the children couldn't quite work out how they could recall their tables so well when they arrived back in the classroom. But most of them could. Jo also discovered that those as young as four were keen to get into the fun.

She was encouraged to produce more and soon a complete set of twelve characters had been produced.

There was 'Professor One Hoot', 'Madam Two Moos', 'Sister Three Baas'. Each had a distinctive name and appearance and they all had their own distinctive character and stories. So great was the enthusiasm for them that a company was formed to create actual plates, and soon all the children in Cumnor's dining room ate off them.

And then other schools heard of them, and wanted them, and parents and grandparents asked if they could have them for home. Mr Gove came out with his pronouncements about the learning of times tables and it soon became obvious that there was no sense in eating off a plain plate when you could learn so much, without

realising it, when eating off the Times Tables Plates.

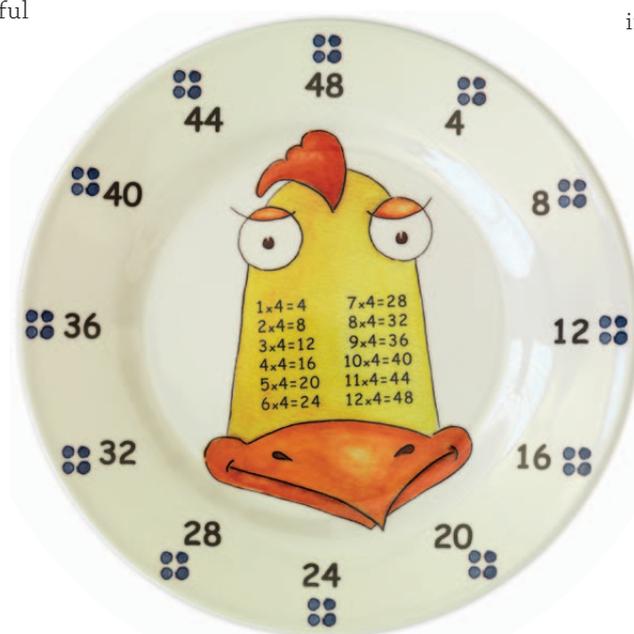
The Head of Wetherby pre-prep wrote: "The boys just love them and enjoy testing each other after they have finished eating. I would highly recommend these plates to both families and schools. There cannot be a better way to learn your tables."

A Sussex reception teacher: "The initial response was fabulous, but what I find more impressive is that the children remain delighted with the plates and their characters. These plates have brought times tables to light. What an ingenious learning tool – and the children don't even realise they are learning."

A Head in Yorkshire: "We purchased your plates and dishes and the children were absolutely thrilled. We are certain that the exposure to multiplication facts over lunch is having a positive impact on the children's instant recall. It is very satisfying to listen to the children challenging each other to remember their times tables over lunch."

Things have moved on rapidly since the plates' humble beginnings. Schools throughout the country, and abroad, now have them and matching bowls and beakers are available. Jo's husband is busy creating a series of interactive eBooks to tell fantasy stories of when the quirky characters, and their numbers, meet each other. Each story is designed to help whole families get together and have a common interest in perfecting their tables.

Schools can see more about the plates at [www.timestablesplates.com](http://www.timestablesplates.com) or have questions answered by telephoning 01444 443800.



# Two-minute leadership



In this extract from his new book, *The Restless School*, Roy Blatchford offers a series of tips for busy school leaders

A celebrated French general was once tactlessly asked, after a famous victory, if it hadn't really been won by the second-in-command.

The general thought for some time before answering: 'Maybe so. But one thing is certain. If the battle had been lost, I would have lost it.'

I vividly recall, as a deputy head, being told by my Headteacher that I would not make the mistakes I was watching him make – but that I should proceed with my career in the certain knowledge that I would make my own. His advice was perspicacious.

Leaders are primates and human, prone to wise judgement and crass error in equal measure. There is just no stopping it. But there is something to be learned from observing others, both what they do successfully and where they falter.

In that spirit, and in the spirit of those self-help, one-minute-manager and one-minute-father books you find in any airport bookshop, the following are offered. Rooted in various encounters, they are not presented in any order of importance, rather as a series of take-away moments.

**Talk with and listen to the students** – they help you keep your finger on the school's pulse, its corridor rumour and playground gossip. Walk through classrooms every day you can, even if it's just to say 'hello'.

**Know your community** – if it is changing, respond promptly. Don't wait to be told that the number of bilingual learners has doubled since you last walked the corridors.

**Compliment someone at least once a day** – you may find it hard to include all your staff here, but try. Practise on someone who might least expect the smile from you. Offer to take a lesson for them. And remember: cynics don't only grow old, they die.

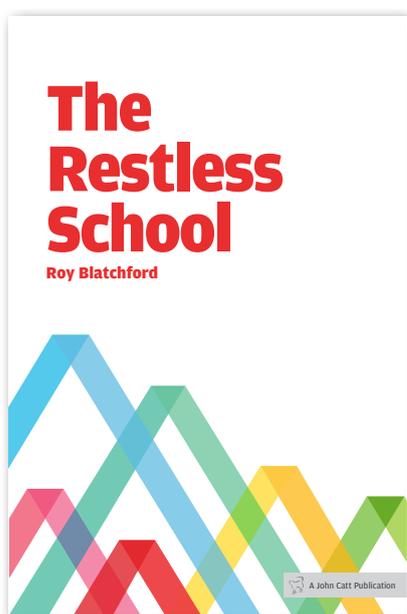
**Be resilient in the face of failure** – admit when you're wrong. When you apologise, never add 'but' to the end of the apology or you'll gain a reputation for insincerity.

**Grasp nettles tightly** – then they won't hurt. Remember Aesop?

**Invest in high quality toilets for students** – you won't regret explaining that additional expenditure to the governors. They have children at the school, and will have been told about the plush soap dispensers, luxuriant plants and framed mirrors in the loos.

**Invest in classrooms** – teachers and students spend 1500 hours a year in them. Buy a chaise longue, Nespresso machine, iPad and water cooler for every teacher.

**Abolish bells** – they belong in another era. Put plants and carpets across the curriculum. Install a luxury fish tank in the entrance foyer to calm irate parents.



**Your best friends are the dustbin and the delete button** – so much ‘stuff’ comes your way, so protect others from it. Cut bureaucracy for your colleagues. De-clutter classrooms, offices and staffroom – secure a deal with a skip company.

**Less is more** – be concise. Remember the following: the Lord’s Prayer – 54 words. The Ten Commandments – 297 words. The American Declaration of Independence – 300 words. The EEC Directive for exporting duck eggs – 26,911 words.

**Bottle the teachers who are young at heart** – infect everyone with their talents. Ensure a variety of skills and intelligences in staff you appoint. Grow your own great people. Certainly look to recruit people who are brighter than you are.

**Stick close to your values** – and be occasionally sceptical of them. Be explicit about the ethical principles upon which you lead.

**Have confidence in your moral commitment, instinct and intuitions** – and have someone to restrain you, probably matron or the head groundsman.

**Enjoy confronting authority and taking risks** – practise the Jesuit principle of management, namely that it’s easier to beg forgiveness than seek permission. Say ‘no’ to a directive and that you believe instead in phyletic gradualism.

**Thrive on accountability** – and occasional chaos. Remember the old maxim (misquoting Kipling) that if you have kept your head when everyone around you is losing theirs, you probably haven’t quite understood what’s going on.

**Keep in mind the big picture** – someone has to. Remember the ‘third eye’ - challenge orthodoxies even if you then find out why some things are orthodox; it’s worth the journey.

**Communicate, communicate, communicate** – and time the communications well. Timing is all. If colleagues disagree with you, they’ll say you haven’t been communicating properly.

**Tell good stories** – people remember them. Stories define who you are in the minds of others, for better or worse. Humour works, not sarcasm.

**Avoid delusions of grandeur** – for everyone’s sake, be reasonably predictable. Perception is all. You’re paid handsomely to smile. And be a great teacher!

**Don’t assume rationality on the part of the people you are dealing with** – accept the idea that there are multiple perceptions of every situation. Learn to live with shades of grey.

**Spare a thought for Bloom** – knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation, synthesis. Not everyone is as capable as you pretend to be of moving upwards through Bloom’s taxonomy of thinking. Some will get stuck half-way.

**Pace yourself** – excellence is not an act but a habit. Focus on a limited number of objectives at a time. Secure a culture of co-workers, not hierarchies.

**Read Seneca and the Stoics** – strive for moral and intellectual perfection. Get the staff to read widely. Be curious and find time for our own interests.

**Take Tuesdays off** – if you’re going to take ‘dedicated headteacher time’ off-site, don’t do it on a Friday or the staff will think you’re off to the ski slopes for the weekend. Learn to develop your inner sloth. Rest your heartbeat somehow.

This article is an extract from Roy Blatchford’s new book, *The Restless School*.

Roy is Director of The National Education Trust ([www.nationaleducationtrust.net](http://www.nationaleducationtrust.net)). The book was published in April 2014 by John Catt Educational, priced £12.99.



# Flying the flag of educational excellence

**Nicholas Smith, Deputy Headteacher at The British School of Kuwait, explains why a technology-led sanctions and rewards system is central to driving excellence in his school**

The British School of Kuwait (BSK) is a microcosm of Britain in the Arabian Gulf. With more than 2500 students from kindergarten to sixth form, we are immensely proud of our large and vibrant learning community, where 75 different nationalities study side by side in pursuit of GCSE, IGCSE and A level success.

Ranked by Ofsted as a 'World Class British School', BSK is heavily oversubscribed and we have very high academic and social expectations of our students.

We recognise that nurturing a good attitude to learning from a young age is key to students' success. With this in mind, we launched an initiative that is helping to move pupil conduct at the school from good to excellent. And the impact on achievement has been incredibly positive.

## **Aiming high**

At BSK, we expect good behaviour from students across

the school. We didn't want to introduce a new behaviour strategy that simply rewarded students for sitting quietly and listening in lessons when they should be doing that anyway. We wanted it to raise the bar and truly motivate every child to excel in both their attitude and achievement.

Up until this point, paper notes were being written by teachers when behavioural incidences occurred. As we don't have a major problem with pupil conduct at the school, we found this could be rather ineffective and patchy. It wasn't easily controlled, it was difficult for our pastoral leadership to make sense of all the slips of paper and not all the teachers were filling them in. Some low level incidents were slipping by too, hidden among the mass of paper.

What we wanted was a more structured system that could be implemented consistently from top junior students, aged 10 years, onwards and offered greater transparency for staff, the children and their parents.

## **Encourage and reward**

The school has always had a housepoint system, but it had historically been dominated by achievement in sports. We saw the potential for developing a points system that rewarded students for their attitude to learning and achievement in class. The aim was for this to become an integral part of inter-house competition.

Now, each teacher is expected to award two housepoints in every lesson; one for achievement and one for attitude to learning. As students accumulate points, they are awarded certificates from bronze to silver and gold. It is all about encouraging the students to try hard and read around the subject.



Negative behaviour points are also issued, where necessary, and students with no negative points at the end of each term are celebrated at a 'Club Zero' party. Being part of this event has become a key goal for our students.

The way we manage this is that teachers record the points they give out at the end of each lesson into our SIMS management information system. They can do this with just a few clicks over the name of the student in the electronic class register.

The new process has really helped us to focus on encouraging and rewarding students. And recording points electronically makes it easier for us to track behaviour patterns across subjects. It also means we are able to deal with any incidents or issues much more quickly than we could before.

### **Greater transparency**

The real strength of the process is that staff can now see what achievement or negative behaviour points a child has received throughout the day. This means tutors can say 'well done' or ask what the points were for and really engage with students on a more regular basis to move them forward.

It also provides us with a wealth of real-time, searchable and reportable data on our students' attitudes to learning that we can analyse easily. Achievement points, awarded through the tightly regulated housepoint system, help us to define academic and pastoral outcomes, while the behaviour data we are gathering supports class tutors and pastoral managers in targeting appropriate interventions where they are needed.

Looking at the impact of the initiative on students' attitudes to learning has been interesting. Since its introduction, we have found that students will often compete with each other in class with the quality of their answers and contributions to group discussions so that they will be awarded the points in the lesson.

### **Looking ahead**

Parental support has always been valued by the school so the next step in our continuing pursuit of excellence is to make it easier for them to engage in school life. As part of this, we are planning to make more information available to parents online, such as details of their child's achievements and homework. This will allow them to log on when it is most convenient for them to do so and enable them to play their part to encouraging their child's progress from home.

Our initiative to improve attitudes to learning has not been about fixing something that was wrong. The aim has always been to help turn what was already good pupil behaviour into excellent behaviour.

There has been a massive cultural shift in our school as a result of the new behaviour system. We have moved from a paper-based system that was difficult to manage and wasn't valued by our students to one that has become a huge motivator for them to aim high in everything they do.

Fostering a good work ethic while children are still young can make a real difference to their achievement throughout each important stage in their education – and stays with them throughout their lives. At BSK, this is something we will strive to instil in every child during their time with us.

# A rite of passage

Jon Glen reflects on 15 years of the Terrington Hall Preparatory School's U13 rugby sevens tournament

As I come to the end of my term as Headmaster of Terrington Hall, after 17 years, I thought I might reflect on one of the few genuinely quantifiable success stories of my tenure (I think!).

In my first year (1997), a long-standing prep school sevens tournament terminated when the school hosting the event closed. This left a gap in the calendar and in conversation with the head of boys' sport at that time, I was asked whether I felt we could 'fill the gap'. Having run several such tournaments earlier in my career, I took no persuasion and so, in March 1999, the Terrington Hall U13 Prep School Sevens Tournament was born.

In the intervening years, I calculate that some 2500 boys, at least 35 schools and approximately 800 games have been played on the first Wednesday of March at Terrington Hall (two tournaments have been defeated by snow and one by Foot and Mouth).

By 2006, the tournament had become the largest U13 sevens in the North of England and quite possibly (other than Rosslyn Park) in the UK.

This year, 24 teams in squads of 11 played 72 matches, produced four trophy winners (Cup, Plate, Bowl and Shield) and four runner up trophies, and were refereed by 12 referees from all over the country. Over 500 sausages were devoured, 250 burgers/hot dogs were sold at £1 a time (to parents and supporters as well as players) and umpteen litres of tea/coffee/hot chocolate drunk.

We began 'small scale' with ten teams. The inaugural winners were Bow School and runners-up Howsham Hall. There was no Plate.

In 2014, 24 teams competed. The winners were St Olave's, York, runners-up Merchiston Castle from Edinburgh. The Plate was won by Sedbergh, the Bowl by Royal Grammar School, Newcastle and the Shield by Barnard Castle School. Not a bad Rugby roll of honour.

So, you may ask, to what do we attribute this success?

Early years went well and reputation developed. No stone should be left unturned to ensure the enjoyment of the children (win or lose) and the efficiency of the event. It is, however, a major undertaking as the organisation of the tournament involves about 50 pupils in various roles. It is

also essential that we have good referees and many return year after year (and attend the referees' dinner which takes place after the tournament concludes).

Four pitches run concurrently: each pitch has a referee's runner, two ball boys and two touch judges, which ensures five minutes each way actually means exactly that. No time wasted retrieving balls. Each team has a guide (pupil) who meets them on arrival and remains with them for as long as required. Other children are deputed to help with BBQ, tea and coffee, programme distribution, scoreboard etc.

As the tournament has developed, sponsors have been sourced to provide a small 'tented village'. Other tents are erected to provide shelter in the event of inclement weather.

In short, each year has seen some subtle changes to ensure that the tournament is as slick as possible. Not once have the final matches failed to kick off on time.

It may not be everyone's idea of pleasure but it is probably the biggest team event of the school year. It has caused me plenty of sleepless nights over the years and few will forget the sight of yours truly with shovel and broom trying to clear the pitch markings at 7.30am after three inches of overnight snow. It nearly worked but another snow storm at 9.30am put paid to the plan that year.

For all that, I shall miss it when I retire. It has become a major highlight of my school year and it shows the staff and pupils at their very best, pulling together in a common cause. It's all hands on deck and everyone's hands are willing – even the Bursar is prepared to dress in a fluorescent green jacket to act as car park attendant.

Tournaments such as these are a feature of prep-school life up and down the country, often regular fixtures in each school's sporting calendar going back many years.

For the visiting schools, coaches and parents, it's an annual coming together with its own rhythm and rituals, an occasion where friendships are forged, acquaintanceships renewed and, in true sporting spirit, respect shown for talent wherever it may shine, the Player of the Tournament being a much coveted award.

The chances are that the paths of these boys and girls and their parents will cross again, whether at their senior

schools, university or another walk of life. The continuity of the link with their prep schools days is something that many will cherish. Many of them will have faced each other over the rugby, football, cricket, netball and hockey pitch many, many times over at matches and tournaments since the age of eight.

For the Terrington Hall U13 boys themselves, after years of watching the Terrington Hall U13 rugby sevens from the sidelines, and later on helping out themselves as team guides, runners and or touch judges, the event is a culmination of their time at the school, a rite of passage of their time with us. If they carry away with them just a little of the sense of pride in their school and themselves that imbues the occasion, then it's something precious from their prep school days that will stay with them forever.



# SATIPS general knowledge challenge 2014

Many congratulations to all those who took part and, especially, to the senior winner, Patrick Beare (Hilden Grange School) for the second year running and to the junior winner, James Lester (Solefield School, Sevenoaks).

The winning schools were Culford Prep and Westminster Under School (Senior) and Magdalen College Junior School (Junior).

There were 63 schools entering nearly 1000 pupils in the Senior Challenge and 93 schools with over 1700 entries in the Junior section. I am very grateful to both Gill Heather

and Lynne Moore for their hard work marking the papers. I would also like to thank Alyson Cowlshaw for her administrative help and getting papers into the post on time.

Thank you for entering and we hope your pupils enjoyed taking part and that you felt it was a worthwhile exercise. Next year's Challenge will take place during the first week of February 2015.

Michael Denton, Challenge Organiser  
[competition@cheamschool.co.uk](mailto:competition@cheamschool.co.uk)

## SATIPS Junior Challenge 2014 Results

### Top Schools

1. Magdalen College Junior School	370	4. Stephen Perse Foundation Junior School	340
2. Westminster Under School	347	5. King's College Junior School	337
3. Newland House School	346	The Pilgrims' School	

### Individual Winners

1. James Lester (Solefield, Sevenoaks)	84	15. Max Florez (King's College Junior)	73
2. Ben McCluskey (St Francis)	81	Johnny Powell (Denmead)	
3. Hugo Gregg (Magdalen College Junior School)	80	17. Harry Cadogan (Aysgarth)	72
4. Elliott Gregg (Magdalen College Junior School)	79	Jamie Lambert (Dulwich Prep)	
Christian Nuijens (Bickley Park)		Gabriel Leigh (Marlborough House)	
6. Lucas Haskins (Newland House)	78	Alex Linney (Bedford Prep)	
7. Arthur Ritchie (Twyford)	77	Tarek Kahn (Magdalen College Junior School)	
8. Benedict Aung (Ursuline Preparatory School)	76	Charlie O'Donoghue (St Paul's Cathedral School)	
Brendan Bethlehem (Westminster Under School)		Johann Orly (Westminster Under School)	
Ted Warner (St Francis)		Ruari Wilson (Liverpool College)	
11. James Gowers (Gayhurst)	75	25. Elliot Blaikley (Newland House)	71
Sandy Robson (Devonshire House)		Lex Galloway (The Froebelian)	
13. George Cox (Bickley Park)	74	Alex Lewis (Hilden Grange)	
Flora Wilson (Sandroyd)		Gregor Lumsden (Dulwich Prep)	

Sarah Marshall (Stephen Perse Foundation Junior)	Akshay Patel (Leicester Grammar Junior School)
Alexander Nash (Denmead)	Benjamin Perryman (Yateley Manor)
Jacob Spence (The Pilgrims')	Noah Rahman (Liverpool College)
32. Suhas Arun (Magdalen College Junior School) 70	Freja Schaap (Orchard House)
Lily Bishop (Dame Bradbury's)	Kailiti Singh (Stephen Perse Foundation Junior)
Oliver Craig (Felsted Prep)	

### SATIPS Senior Challenge 2014 Results

#### Top Schools

1. Culford Prep	392	4. Dulwich Prep	382
Westminster Under School		King's College Junior School	
3. Shrewsbury House School	388		

#### Individual Winners

1. Patrick Beare (Hilden Grange School)	89	Raoul Myer (Westminster Under School)	
2. Oliver Perry (Brambletye)	87	Eva Timlin (Marlborough House)	
Fergus Schofield (Culford Prep)		21. George Goodhart (Westminster Under School)	77
4. Alex Davies (Shrewsbury House)	83	George Harvey (Felsted Prep)	
Harry Goodwin (Dulwich Prep)		Howard Hawkes (Pinewood)	
6. Alex Brayshaw (Culford Prep)	82	Oliver Hotchin (Shrewsbury House)	
Matthew Chan (St John's College School)		Lucas Jacobelli (Westminster Under School)	
Felix Mallalieu (Bedford Prep)		Max Raphael (Westminster Under School)	
9. Laura Brown (Twyford School)	81	Tomas Utting (King's College School)	
Tom Cox (Bickley Park School)		28. Charlie Lappin (Twyford School)	76
11. Ivo Pope (Westminster Under School)	80	Kit Trustram Eve (The Pilgrims')	
Fabian Pountney (Shrewsbury House)		Jamie Williams (Bedford Prep)	
Rishi Sharma (Dulwich Prep)		31. Adam Brandt (King's College School)	75
Christopher Thorn (Westminster Under School)		Hector Crosbie (Westminster Under School)	
15. Charlie Harris (Sandroyd)	79	Anna Hutchinson (Culford Prep)	
Frederic Scowen (King's College School)		Charlotte Pavey (The Downs School, Bristol)	
17. Benedict Carroll (King's College School)	78	Felix Turner (King's House School)	
James Hodson (Shrewsbury House)			

#### Breakdown of Schools (Junior)

>324	13
310-324	9
300-309	14
275-299	25
250-274	13
230-249	10
<230	3
No Papers Returned	6

#### Breakdown of Schools (Senior)

>374	5
350-374	6
320-349	13
300-319	11
275-299	12
250-274	9
<250	4
No Papers Returned	3

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# Does your school have the knowledge to succeed?

Malcolm Priestley offers some insight on the importance of information and the benefits of upgrading to a new MIS

Over the last few years, prep schools have faced some tough challenges in the midst of increasing competition, rising costs and the capping of fees to an acceptable level. As a result of these pressures, many schools have unfortunately been forced to close whilst others are left to re-evaluate how they retain and attract new pupils.

Reputation obviously plays a major part in ensuring that waiting lists are full, but for many prep schools this is luxury and is far from the norm. Every year, pupils leave from the top of the school and need to be replenished from the bottom. As the modern parent become even more demanding and is looking for a clearer 'return on their investment', prep schools should consider how systems and procedures could improve their overall appeal, from supporting pastoral care to boosting the quality of parental communication.

## Information is power

One key area sometimes overlooked is the importance of being able to easily access vital information whether it's

for administrators that need to check a pupil's medical records or for teachers checking attendance. Many prep schools still rely on out of date MIS systems (that are often no longer supported), Excel sheets that are inefficient and time-consuming or even paper-based records which are often duplicated, inaccurate or difficult to access by the majority of staff.

Not being able to pool and share real-time information across the school can put you at a disadvantage when it comes to making informed decisions, whether it's on influencing pupil performance or being more prepared for an inspection – if crucial information is locked away in a filing cabinet then it's not likely to make the best impression.

## Selecting an MIS

Before looking for a new solution it is worth doing your homework first. So really think about what you want to get out of it and go and see a solution in another school that's



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similar to you. You may even find that some suppliers offer special rates or deals for prep schools.

If you do not have an IT resource on site, then it's also worth involving a third party consultant that can hold your hand and ask the practical questions such as how will it work with any other IT that you have, what benefits do you want from it and how soon should you see some tangible results. One example of what a good MIS should deliver might include help with assessments with the ability for a Headteacher to flick through screens to show parents how their child is performing. Teachers should also have the power to see at a glance what pupils are doing well and those that are under-performing and need extra help. Being able to feed parents information regularly is also key, so you need a solution that will enhance the quality of regular reports, one of the prized elements of information most valued by parents.

### Realising your potential

With a new MIS in place, you have the potential to see year on year incremental benefits as a result of a more integrated approach. With easy access to accurate information, your academic staff have all the knowledge they need to support pupil development and with more regular and detailed reports you can ensure that parents are fully informed and happy.

Malcolm Priestley has over 18 years of assisting preparatory schools with their ICT and now works part-time as an independent consultant and adviser to IAPS.

He can be contacted at [malcolm.priestley@larrytech.com](mailto:malcolm.priestley@larrytech.com)

## Case study: Sandroyd Prep supports pastoral care and faster pupil academic reporting

Sandroyd Preparatory Boarding School based in Wiltshire which can trace its roots back to 1888 currently has 180 pupils in the prep school and 40 pupils in the pre-prep.

IT Services Manager at Sandroyd School, Carol Webster explains why they looked at upgrading their information management system, "One of the key motivations for looking for a new system was that teachers wanted to do their end of term academic school reports at home in their own time. Also, at school, some teaching staff use shared desktops, so it can be difficult to coordinate and generally reports were taking a long time to produce."

"We also wanted to improve access to up-to-date pupil information, particularly relating to pastoral care. Pupil notes were originally recorded in a book, making it more cumbersome to update on a regular basis and also more difficult for different staff to look up information quickly at any location."

"We implemented 3Sys from WCBS when it was first launched" says Carol. "Like any new system, there is often a mixed reaction as some are more technology-savvy than others, but now that everyone's used to it, they all like the fact that it's made their jobs a lot easier. With reporting for example this is now much faster than it was previously and they now have the ability to do this when and where they choose. They can also input information directly onto the system without having to paste from other documents."

"It is very important to have up-to-date information on pupils available to all our 40 teachers. Maintaining a high quality of pastoral care is particularly important in a boarding school environment where children are away from their parents and sometimes require even greater emotional support. The new system provides a single point of access for all information that can contribute to pastoral care.

Not only does the system provide comprehensive information on pupils, but teachers can also benefit from additional information such as details on parents, so they know who is connected with whom. Pupil information is centralised on a single system which means that everyone is looking at the same data, rather than it being spread across a multitude of sources. We can also authorise who can input new data, so we know we can rely on the information being correct."

# 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](mailto:coursedirector@satips.com)  
SATIPS members get a discount of £25 per course ( £150) non- member schools £175

14 May	Large scale drawing and sculpture	Aldro School
15 May	Teaching Phonics and Spelling	London
20 May	Risk management: Best practice risk management in Prep Schools	London
22 May	Tackling Problems with Reading, Spelling, Handwriting and Grammar	London
2 Jun	Moving to Pastoral Leadership	London
12 Jun	Form tutors: their roles skills and responsibilities	London
11 Mar	Enrich and extend	London

## Other courses and events

### BSA

Further details on BSA courses can be found via [www.boarding.org.uk](http://www.boarding.org.uk)

13 May	Relationships in Boarding	London
7 July	Annual Conference for Nurses and Matrons	Birmingham

### GSA

For details of all courses and conferences in the GSA Professional Development Programme visit: [www.gsa.uk.com/professional-development](http://www.gsa.uk.com/professional-development)

20 May	New Heads' introduction	Stratford
21 May	Junior/Prep Heads' introduction	Stratford
20 Jun	Effective Subject Co-ordinator in the Primary Phase	Palmers Green High School
3 Mar	Heads of Year Conference	Oxford
13-14 Mar	Cross Association Junior Heads Conference	Holiday Inn, Stratford-upon-Avon

### ISA

15-17 May	Annual Conference	Coventry
22 May	EYFS practice: assessment, recording and meeting Regulatory Requirements	Chester
5 Jun	Addressing learning difficulties through the INPP school movement programme	Ascot
12 Jun	Developing musicality – an important key to learning in EYFS and Key Stage 1/2	Ascot

### Society of Heads

Further details on Society of Heads courses can be found via [www.thesocietyofheads.org.uk](http://www.thesocietyofheads.org.uk)

11 Jun	New Heads' Conference (Part 1)	Oxford
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# Hit 'send' and collect your P45!

Dear Parents,

I have been aware for many years that a considerable proportion of the parent body are slightly nuts. Tell-tale signs include the mother who wore the same outfit every day for a year so that her eight-year-old child recognised her in the car park at the end of the day.

Unfortunately, money does not provide you with intelligence or even common sense. What never ceases to amaze me, as Headmistress, is your capacity to presume that the school staff are as dim as you.

My real issue this term has been the proliferation of children arriving at school quite clearly ill. Not simply runny noses and aching heads, but violent diarrhoea, projectile vomiting, and even, I kid you not, full-blown, doctor-diagnosed chicken pox.

The most common form of deceit appears to be dosing your five-year-old up with Calpol and then stuffing half a dozen sachets into your child's blazer with the instructions to self-medicate as and when they want. This sweet strawberry goo has become the scourge of the infant playground. Staff are on a secret service-style security patrol; frisking pupils as they head to the playground, watching for children loitering in corners, passing small packages from one to another. Sometimes we miss it and the Year 1 classroom after break is full of dazed and doped children smelling sickly sweet.

Imodium is not, I repeat not, an acceptable drug to give to a small child, especially in the doses needed to keep amoebic dysentery at bay for an entire school day. None of my staff appreciate a child approaching them, clutching a dripping pair of pants, during their numeracy lesson. Or even worse, trying to track down the odoriferous clues that a child's bowels have emptied themselves, during a packed Chapel, with 400 children crammed around them.

Things reached a head this term with a particularly virulent vomiting bug. The school rule of '48 hours since the last episode' seems impossible to abide by, regardless of your Patek Philippe timepieces. Sadly your children only tell us that they have been sick in the night when they are standing in the office feeling poorly. The school secretary was less-than impressed when one child managed to vomit not only all over her desk but also into her handbag. The parent's argument that the previous night's incident was 'only a dribble' does not engender much sympathy when you are fishing your purse and keys out of a Weetabix mix.

The question is, why do you send your darling offspring to school when they are quite clearly desperately poorly? Is it because you are about to perform heart surgery on a Nobel Prize winner? Are you entering into crucial negotiations for the UN to establish World peace? No – sadly not. Champagne lunch at Harvey Nicks and then shopping for the latest Mulberry handbag is more frequently the prior engagement. Or, God forbid, a hard-to-come-by appointment with the latest celebrity 'nail stylist'.

So please spare a thought for your children and for my staff team when you make that crucial decision. Poorly children want their parents; they don't want the medical room or the very lovely, but vomit-phobic, school secretary. Be sure your sins will find you out, as one mother discovered in the latter weeks of the term. As the slow-moving traffic inched into the car park I spotted her middle child in the front seat, looking very green. As I moved closer the child bent double and a look of manic panic fixed itself on her mother's face. There was much rummaging in the footwell and the child was clearly vomiting. As I opened the car door I was amazed that there was no visible evidence of the incident. However, the odour was unmissable and a large Mulberry tote was tightly zipped by the child's feet...justice was done. I added to the indignity of the mother by making her take her child home. She didn't argue as I stared pointedly at her horrendously expensive bag, which was starting to seep. Karma.....

Yours sincerely

Miss E Doff



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