

Autumn 2025 ▲ Issue 113

PREP SCHOOL

The magazine by Teachers for Teachers



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Thoughts from the Chair



David Kendall

Dear SATIPS Member,

Welcome back to the new academic year and to a fresh, new look here at SATIPS! As you will notice, we are now fully digital, with electronic editions of Prep School Magazine and our Broadsheets, the first of which you should have seen last term.

Our move to digital formats allows our publications to be accessed across multiple platforms and shared easily throughout your schools. We have also kept membership fees on hold, fully aware of the incredible challenges schools face.

The past year has undoubtedly been one of the toughest our sector has ever faced. The near-weekly news of schools closing or amalgamating made for very sober reading. However, I remain confident that our sector will survive, and even thrive, as schools respond to these challenges and continue to provide outstanding education for their pupils.

At SATIPS, we are committed to supporting you in every way we can. Our Broadsheet editors, all experienced teachers, offer guidance and suggestions in their termly contributions, while Prep School Magazine provides a wide variety of articles relevant to both staff and parents. In addition, our cost-effective, highly relevant webinars continue to provide practical support to staff as they navigate ongoing changes in education. We also run exciting competitions, including our Handwriting competition, The Challenge and the Art Exhibition, giving pupils the chance to shine and showcase their talents. We are delighted that Bilton Grange have kindly offered to host the Art Exhibition this year and details will soon follow.

We are also excited to share that SATIPS will be partnering for the very first time with the **Schools and Academies Show (SAAS)**, taking place at the NEC in Birmingham on 19th and 20th November 2025. This important national event brings together educators, leaders, and sector experts to share insights, innovations, and best practice across education. Our collaboration with SAAS will provide SATIPS members with a stronger voice on a national platform, opportunities to connect with colleagues across the wider education community, and direct access to some of the latest thinking and resources shaping the future of schools. Further details of how members can benefit from this exciting partnership are to be found in Prep School Magazine and online.

We are always keen to assist, so please do not hesitate to contact us at info@satips.org with any questions, suggestions, or ideas.

With best wishes for the year ahead,

David Kendall
Chair, SATIPS



From The Editor



If I had a pound for every time the phrase was uttered, “Where did the Summer holidays go?” in common rooms across the length and breadth of the land, I would be the proverbial very rich man. They are well and truly over and one hopes that in their passing, those happy times with family and friends have played their part in preparing one and all for the new academic year.

As we all know-and as those new to the profession very quickly find out-this wonderful career of ours requires us to, “hit the ground running; travel from 0-60 and be bright eyed and bushy tailed,” from the very first day of term to the last. There is no hiding place. We cannot leave the phone to ring, not respond to e mails, sit quietly in our studies and not do

all those things our acquaintances do in other professions when they return to work. We, of course, do not even see what we do as “work” and, come what may, we know we have to perform at our very best each and every day. And for those who have chosen the boarding school life, that will be 7 days a week.

How do we do it? There are a variety of factors involved. We have a passion for our subject; we are energised and inspired by the pupils we see in front of us; we enjoy the company of and the collaboration with our colleagues; we are always looking to improve in what we do and are always willing to learn; we thrive on thanks, mild praise and appreciation-and we delight in being part of a team and contributing to the ethos of the schools we are in.

All of the SATIPS team are products of this and more. And we are acutely aware that this has been one of the most difficult summers for everyone in the independent sector and an air of uncertainty prevails. Do confide in us if you feel you need “a chat” because, as we all know, “It

is good to talk.” This organisation always has been, “By teachers, For Teachers” so do use us to the full.

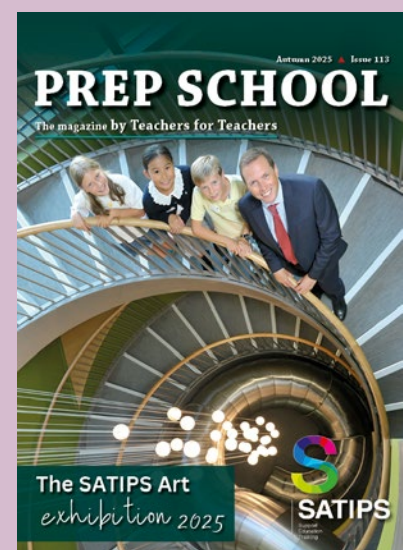
I am on a personal crusade at the moment. I have always felt that everyone involved in education should be in possession of a “physical” first aid certificate-at the very least. I now believe that we should have a “mental health” first aid certificate which will benefit everyone in our school communities-including, of course, ourselves. To this end, I am working with some very good people to produce an easily accessible, best practice version. You are all doing the same in your schools, in your subjects every day of the week.

It has been a pleasure to put this very first “all electronic” edition of the Magazine together. I am, as ever, indebted to all who have contributed. Thank you.

Prep School Magazine

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

A SATIPS Publication



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Cover Image

Opening of the new boarding house
Bilton Grange, Rugby

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Reports of the Death of the Teacher are Greatly Exaggerated



Dr Christopher Stevens was Headmaster of Bradfield College from 2015 - 2025. He is now Director of Education for Heritage Xperiential Schools in Delhi NCR and is Executive Head elect of Clifton College. A lifelong educator across all age ranges, he remains dedicated to making a difference through the privileged opportunities teaching offers.

*In June 2015, in the face of accelerating developments in educational technology and the rise of the MOOC, I argued for the continued importance of the teacher in an article entitled **A Human Pursuit in the Digital Age**. Looking back to the historic defeat of world chess champion, Gary Kasparov by the computer Big Blue in 1997 and the invention of autopilot for aircraft as early as 1914, I referenced advanced chess and the ‘miracle on the Hudson’ in arriving at the optimistic conclusion that despite*

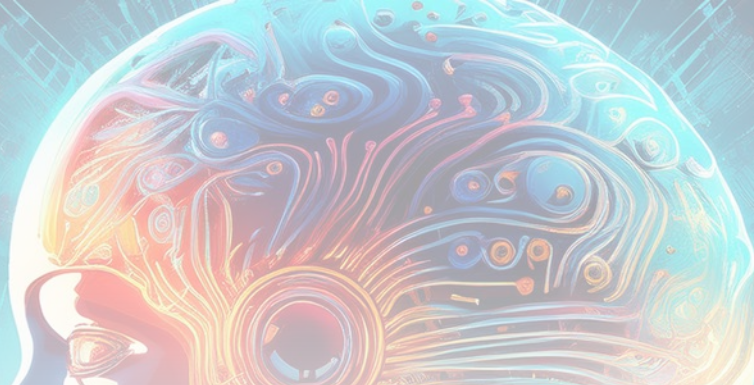
technological advances, humans remained invaluable in completing complex tasks:

“The good news is that chess players, pilots, and teachers are changing. The latest and the safest aircraft technology assists pilots, rather than replacing them. Fly-by-wire automation is no longer characterised by the inexorable march of the autopilot but increasingly sees man and machine in partnership. In a similar development, ‘freestyle’ chess competitions see the highest number of matches won by entrants playing as ‘centaurs’, players who use computers to decide most moves but occasionally override them. Likewise, many of the very best teachers exploit technology to the full when it helps, just as they might choose to use a textbook. Or not.”

Less than a year later, news came through that a self-trained artificial

intelligence system had outplayed an elite professional at Go, the world’s hardest game. AlphaGo beating Lee Sodol in an activity requiring strategic, intuitive and creative thought was an epochal moment in the development of AI. It did not, however, shake my conviction that teaching and learning in schools remained a process best mediated by humans. Indeed, my first meeting with the teaching staff of Bradfield College, where I had moved in the interim, was on the theme of great teachers and entitled ‘the classroom conversation’. It has taken the rapid advances in AI of the last few years, and notably the emergence of large language models, to make me wonder more seriously about the future of my vocation.

I was slow to experiment with ChatGPT. My initial wake-up call was hearing a leading executive of the WEF describe it as his ‘thought partner’ in a discussion about the



future of work recorded at Davos in February 2023. A first tryout of the application saw me asking it to draft a short speech to Bradfield's prefects, thanking them for all they did for their school. I ran the result past my wife, who tactfully suggested that whilst good overall, it was a little impersonal. She was shocked when I explained its origin and the fact it had taken 15 seconds to produce, concluding memorably that like the dishwasher, it promised to take 'a lot of rubbish' out of our lives!

So where do I stand two years later as more and more sophisticated AIs emerge, promising to replace so many things humans have historically done for themselves? As I look to the future of education, can I imagine a world where, armed by limitless data, AI is curating individualised learning pathways for my pupils, assessing their work and offering them bespoke feedback whilst I improve my golf handicap? Can I imagine a world where technology is no longer a tool, or even a collaborator, but an initiator of knowledge-based learning with teachers playing a supporting role? Can I imagine a world where being taught by a human will be an idiosyncratic choice or a hobby for a monied elite, like riding a horse in the age of the car (or in due course like driving a car in an age of driverless ones)? Yes. Yes. And no.

As teachers and schools like Bradfield College and Heritage Xperiential Schools In India, where I am now based, emerge from a phase of experimentation and start to consider strategic implementation of AI, mastering new digital competencies is a priority for teacher and learner alike. Productivity gains in repetitive tasks currently offer the most immediate rewards. Teachers have investigated help with report writing, marking and lesson planning just as eagerly as their pupils have sought short cuts in essay writing and prep completion.

Meanwhile, online searches now offer beguilingly persuasive and well-constructed summary results alongside individual references, such that for many people Google's AI overview has become the new Wikipedia. In similar vein, rapid and sophisticated data analysis provides new opportunities for all school departments, from the academic office to the admissions team and from catering to sports coaching.

When considering the impact of AI on pupil outcomes, however, we are currently limited by lack of clear evidence for its efficacy. There is little doubt that this will emerge over time, but there will be plenty of pitfalls, false dawns and dead ends along the way. AI has already shown its potential to support teaching and learning in multiple ways, ranging well beyond the basic tasks of the previous paragraph to more complex activity including real-time marking, interactive feedback, reading emotions and engaging learners. Indeed, the personalisation and gamification of learning promise to revolutionise one of the most sophisticated and 'human' aspects of teaching, the ability to motivate.

How far and how fast we travel down this road remains to be seen. I am neither expecting to move as quickly as many commentators predict, nor am I as enthusiastic about the prospect. Nevertheless, as we embark upon the journey, we must ask what role teachers may have along the way, beside being fellow travellers seeking to equip ourselves and our pupils with the skills to navigate an AI-enabled world. We must also ask what we can do on arrival at a destination where machines will be better than teachers at so many of our current activities. If AI assumes responsibility for content delivery and assessment, as well as feedback and motivation, what will be left for the teacher? If AI relieves teachers of many accustomed

responsibilities, where might our help still be required?

The answer to this question lies in the social, collective and collaborative aspects of learning. Teachers are – sometimes unwittingly – mediators of human interaction, both between teacher and learner, and between learners (and sometimes parents). Teachers model attitudes to listening, to learning, and to living. The teacher is a reference point for pupils' growth, and a compass for their social, emotional and ethical development. Like parents – for better or worse – teachers are role models. This is especially true in early years and primary, as I have come to appreciate through my daughters' teachers in the Bradfield Group prep school, St Andrew's and in The Heritage primary sections.

In a world where humans are having to come to terms with living with technology, we must not therefore allow learning to become a solitary activity mediated by machines, such that we risk losing the ability to live with one another. That is why schools are crucial places, classrooms are important social spaces, and teachers are essential to their health.

In what may strike some readers as a dystopian future of machine-led learning, AI becomes an enemy of the teacher rather than a tool for the teacher. If instead we focus on the work of the teacher as a connector, communicator and relationships expert at the heart of a community of learners then AI becomes a facilitator of that essential activity by freeing up more time for it. Through a focus on the pupil as an individual and group member and through emphasis on uniquely human qualities, the role of the teacher becomes less functional, more 'humanistic', and arguably more important than ever.



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September

30 TUESDAY
4pm - 5.30pm

Speaker:

SARAH CAREY

Is Everything OK with your EYFS?

Exploring the Expectations and
Implications for Leaders & Teachers

Target Audience: **Leaders and Teachers.**

October

02 THURSDAY
4pm - 6.30pm

Speaker:

JOHN REES

Improving the mentoring of trainee and Early Career Teachers (ECTs)

Target Audience: **School Leaders, Mentors, Teacher Train-
ers, and Early Career Teachers.**

07 TUESDAY
5pm - 6.30pm

Speaker:

JOHN MEDLICOTT

How to Conduct a Work Scrutiny

Target Audience: **Teachers of Year 3 and above,
Heads of Department, Middle & Senior Management.**

November

04 TUESDAY
4pm - 6.30pm

Speaker:

JOHN MEDLICOTT

Improving Pupil Progress Through Highly Effective Marking and Feedback

Target Audience: **All Teachers especially Years 3-8.**

06 THURSDAY
4.30pm - 6pm

Speaker:

ED CLARKE

Latin:

an examiner's perspective on the new CE, 13+ scholarship
preparations and how best to approach key topics

Target Audience: **Teachers and
Middle & Senior Management, Years 4-8.**

November

10 MONDAY
4.30pm - 6pm

Speaker:

ADAM GILLETT

AI and Mental Health

Reducing Workload and Enhancing Staff Wellbeing
in Schools

Target Audience: **Leadership and anyone responsible for
mental health, staff wellbeing or interested in AI.**

17 MONDAY
4.30pm - 6pm

Speaker:

ADAM GILLETT

Harnessing AI to Support Children's Mental Health in Schools

Target Audience: **School Leaders, Teachers, Pastoral
teams, and staff responsible for student wellbeing,
safeguarding, and pastoral care.
Especially those working with KS2 and KS3.**

18 TUESDAY
4pm - 6pm

Speaker:

JOHN MEDLICOTT

Raising Standards in Teaching & Learning

Target Audience: **Teachers and School Leaders
looking to raise standard of teaching.**

20 THURSDAY
4.30pm - 6pm

Speaker:

ED CLARKE

Ancient Greek:

an examiner's perspective on the new CE specification and
best practice in Classics teaching

Target Audience: **Classroom Teachers and Middle & Senior
Management, Years 4-8.**

25 TUESDAY
4pm - 5.30pm

Speaker:

NOVA ROBINSON

Maximising Learning Opportunities in KS1

Target Audience: **Teachers and Leaders of KS1 -
Year 1 and Year 2.**

Playing the Numbers Round

How to Look Like a Genius (When You're Not!)



Dan Reeve is Deputy Head Academic at Shrewsbury, having been Head of Mathematics at Winchester College, Hampshire.

In 1997, Countdown contestant James Martin astonished the audience with what remains an inspiring numbers round on the popular Channel 4 programme. Carol Vorderman announced his chosen numbers (including 'four from the top') as 25, 50, 75, 100, 6, and 3, with a target of 952. Fast-forward 30 seconds and the other contestant, Gerald, offered 953, later revealed as:

$$(6+3) \times 100 + 50 + 75 \div 25$$

although it is also possible with only four of the numbers:

$$(25-6) \times 50 + 3$$

But to everyone's surprise, James said with confidence, 'I think I have 952.'

'It'll be great if you have,' pronounced an intrigued Richard Whiteley.

Carol began to write out his solution:

$$\begin{aligned} 100 + 6 &= 106 \\ 106 \times 3 &= 318 \end{aligned}$$

So far so good. But then James announced 'I would like to multiply by 75, now.'

'Multiply this by 75!' exclaims Carol, pointing at the 318. The audience began to laugh, and the solution proceeds:

$$\begin{aligned} 318 \times 75 &= 23\,850 \\ 23\,850 - 50 &= 23\,800 \\ 23\,800 \div 25 &= 952 \end{aligned}$$

'That's probably the most incredible answer we've ever had on Countdown,' states Carol, as applause erupts throughout the studio. But one curious detail, which in that moment Carol also seemed to have missed, is

that James didn't even know what 318×75 equalled: 'I'm not quite sure what that makes, but I'd like to do 318 times 75,' he admits, while revealing his solution. How then did he know the final answer would be 952?

He knew that $318 \times 3 = 954$ and so wanted to do $318 \times 3 - 2 = 952$. He had the numbers 75, 50 and 25 available, and was aware that $75 \div 25 = 3$ and $50 \div 25 = 2$. But this would require using the 25 twice, so he thought a little bit smarter:

$$\begin{aligned} 318 \times 3 - 2 &= 318 \times \frac{75}{25} - \frac{50}{25} \\ &= \frac{318 \times 75}{25} - \frac{50}{25} \\ &= \frac{318 \times 75 - 50}{25} \end{aligned}$$

In this way, the 25 is only used once, with the added bonus of everyone in the room thinking that he is a genius! Not to take away from the achievement – it is an impressive calculation to find in 30 seconds, while

under pressure, but perhaps not quite as impressive as it first seems.

I use this example to illustrate to pupils that they should always look for 'clever' ways of simplifying calculations, rather than approaching everything head on. When you realise that the calculation below left can be solved as below right, you solve the problem in a fraction of the time:

$$\frac{318 \times 75 - 50}{25} = 318 \times 3 - 2$$

Questions that challenge pupils to think in this way have long been a feature of Winchester's Mathematics curriculum and Entrance examinations, particularly the scholarship papers, known as Election. Candidates might attempt such questions by 'brute force', accompanied by oodles of calculations including long multiplication or division. But to complete them in this way will use up too much time, and frequently leads to mistakes.

BIDMAS can be your enemy as well as your friend

The application of correct order of operations in mathematics, as per the acronym BIDMAS (or other equivalent acronyms) is, on the one hand essential, but on the other, can blinker pupils to broader possibilities.

Questions such as:

$$4 \times 4 + 4 \times 4 + 4 - 4 \times 4 = ?$$

can be seen all over social media and seem to attract fierce debate in the comments section over the correct solution, despite it being obvious to most school-age children (in this case, 20). But the true skill comes in realising when alternative approaches are possible. There are several such situations, but this article focuses on three, which pupils should try to be mindful of:

- Questions involving brackets
- Questions involving fractions (or division)
- Questions involving roots

NB: all three effectively involve brackets, since a fraction and a root indicate the equivalent of a bracket around parts of the calculation, i.e.,

$$\frac{4 \times 5 + 2}{6 + 5} \text{ means } \frac{(4 \times 5 + 2)}{(6 + 5)}$$

$$\text{and } \sqrt{10 + 5 \times 3}$$

$$\text{means } \sqrt{(10 + 5 \times 3)}$$

but the point here is that it is not always necessary to evaluate the 'bracketed' part first, as we now examine.

1. Questions involving brackets

Consider the below general case:

$$a - (a - b) = a - a + b = b$$

When expressed algebraically, there is no other way to simplify the calculation but to 'multiply out' the bracket. But when the letters are replaced with numbers, many pupils fail to spot the opportunity. Here is a past Winchester Entrance question which countless pupils failed to handle as intended:

$$9464 - (9464 - 289)$$

Instead of immediately writing the answer of 289, or perhaps first writing the (non-essential) intermediate step of $9464 - 9464 + 289$, many instead miss the point and diligently handle the bracket first, as they have learned. Their intermediate step becomes $9464 - 9175$ and a while later they arrive at 289, or else get the wrong answer altogether. Applying techniques which are more frequently associated with manipulating algebraic expressions to solving number problems can be a game changer when pupils first discover it. *Genius status, initiating!*

2. Questions involving fractions:

Consider another general case:

$$\frac{ax + bx}{x} = \frac{x(a + b)}{x} = a + b$$

A version of this principle of identifying a common factor is what

we saw James Martin apply in the Countdown numbers round example.

Sometimes the common factor may be obviously helpful:

$$\frac{56 + 63}{7} = \frac{7 \times 8 + 7 \times 9}{7}$$

$$= \frac{7 \times (8 + 9)}{7} = 8 + 9 = 17$$

and sometimes less obvious at first:

$$\frac{48 + 64}{7} = \frac{16 \times 3 + 16 \times 4}{7}$$

$$= \frac{16 \times (3 + 4)}{7} = 16$$

But with practice, calculations like both of these can be completed with little or no intermediate working and more quickly than calculating $119 \div 7$ or $112 \div 7$ respectively. When teaching these ideas to a pupil, they might cling to their existing approach, especially if the question is just about solvable that way, so it may be necessary to give them even more awkward problems to reinforce the value of the approach. Consider solving:

$$\frac{121212 + 242424 + 363636 + 484848}{10}$$

which is a take on a past Winchester Entrance question. We would hope pupils may spot that:

$$\frac{121212 + 242424 + 363636 + 484848}{10}$$

$$= \frac{121212 \times (1 + 2 + 3 + 4)}{10} = 121212$$

This is not about promoting 'cheap tricks', but about encouraging and testing pupils' ability to think a little more creatively with their mathematics. Spotting this certainly doesn't make you a genius, but I've taught these techniques to Year 7 pupils during open days who go away and, to their amusement, feel like a genius in front of their uninitiated friends when they solve something like the above in a few seconds without writing anything down.

3. Questions involving roots

At some point during the years leading up to GCSEs, pupils will be taught the following rules of surds:

$$\sqrt{a \times b} = \sqrt{a} \times \sqrt{b}$$

$$\frac{\sqrt{a}}{\sqrt{b}} = \frac{\sqrt{a}}{\sqrt{b}}$$

Learning these rules earlier rather than later opens up another set of doors to speed up calculations and achieve that 'genius' status. Straightforward examples you might find on our entrance papers include:

$$\sqrt{1600} = \sqrt{16} \times \sqrt{100} = 4 \times 10 = 40$$

or:

$$\sqrt{\frac{27}{48}} = \sqrt{\frac{9}{16}} = \frac{3}{4}$$

But we can lead on to more complicated cases, such as:

$$\frac{\sqrt{128} + \sqrt{18}}{\sqrt{2}} = \frac{\sqrt{64 \times 2} + \sqrt{9 \times 2}}{\sqrt{2}}$$

$$= \frac{\sqrt{2} \times (\sqrt{64} + \sqrt{9})}{\sqrt{2}}$$

$$= \frac{\sqrt{2} \times (8 + 3)}{\sqrt{2}} = 11$$

Consider another example, which at first glance seems to require pupils to know the square of 51. Conventional wisdom may suggest to solve the below as follows:

$$\sqrt{289 + 8 \times 289} = \sqrt{289 + 2312}$$

$$= \sqrt{2601} = 51$$

Now, if a pupil sitting the Winchester Entrance examinations solved it in this way and got the correct answer, we would still be very impressed, but they would almost certainly have wasted precious time and failed to demonstrate the ability to think outside the constraints of BIDMAS. Such a solution would likely be accompanied by much supplementary working, or guess work,

especially for the final step. Instead, approach the question like this, which is more elegant:

$$\sqrt{289 + 8 \times 289} = \sqrt{289 \times (1 + 8)}$$

$$= \sqrt{289} \times \sqrt{9} = 17 \times 3 = 51$$

Part of the suggested approach requires pupils to know that $\sqrt{289}=17$, and it is worth noting here that we would recommend pupils memorise the square numbers up to 20^2 and the cube numbers up to 10^3 , as well as the first ten powers of two, and the first five powers of three and five. Committing these to memory helps spot possible simplifications of many problems involving indices and especially square and cube roots.

Genius status: activated!

Endnote

If any keen pupils wish to design questions which apply these principles, I would be delighted to receive them via post to the below address. Is there a prize? Of course – ingenious questions will be considered for inclusion in future Winchester College Entrance and Election examination papers.

*Mr Dan Reeve
Head of Mathematics
Winchester College
SO23 9NA*

Over to you

Below are ten questions, inspired by Winchester Entrance and Election examinations, which can all be solved quickly, and with little or no written calculation, by applying some of the above principles. I hope they prove enjoyable and informative for pupils:

1. $905 - (905 - 83)$
2. $\sqrt{8100}$
3. $99 + 49 \times 99$
4. $\sqrt{4^2 \times 5^2}$
5. $\frac{30 \times 512 - 57}{3}$
6. $101 - (101 - (101 - (101 - 1)))$
7. $\frac{44 + 66 + 88}{4 + 6 + 8}$
8. $(1 + 3 + 5 + 7 + 9 + 11) - (2 + 4 + 6 + 8 + 10 + 12)$
9. $\frac{87^2 + 87}{87}$
10. $\frac{\sqrt[3]{4 \times 6 \times 9}}{\sqrt{20 \times 6 \times 30}}$

A Writing Odyssey



Catriona Riordan is Manchester born and has been teaching Secondary English Language and Literature for twenty seven years. After six years in a State School in the U.K, she made the move to Dubai and has been teaching in the Private Sector there ever since. She has worked at three schools in Dubai, where she was Head of English, before moving on to Dubai College as Head of KS3 English. She gained her Masters in Creative Writing in 2024.

Books, words, stories. I love them with a passion; always have and always will.

From the fairytales that my parents read to me before bed, to the stories from my teenage years that shaped and solidified the person that I have become, stories have been central to my growth: just as they are for the children that we teach.

My love of literature has spanned a teaching career that has lasted twenty-seven years so far, and in that time within schools, I have always loved discovering new books, new tales, new authors and new perspectives.

Reading builds. It builds worlds but reading also builds resilience, empathy and critical thinking. Reading is on the agenda.

But what about writing?

As an English teacher, I talk daily about the correlation between reading and writing; that to be an accomplished writer, you *have to be* an accomplished reader. And whilst, for

myself, the former may be true, I have, like Odysseus, been on a journey of my own over the last few years to try and understand what kind of writer I am and how the work that I produce fits into the publishing world and the world of teaching.

I began my writing journey with a blog about being a new mother whilst working as a Head of English at an independent school in Dubai. As motherhood and the demands of the job progressed, I changed schools and relinquished some responsibility by going part-time, then moving to my current job as a Head of KS3 English at a highly academic independent school. Whilst this afforded me less meeting time and less responsibility, life continued at a crazy pace.

Firstly, working as a full-time teacher and deciding that I was going to write a novel meant that time was the one thing that I was going to need. Time was a luxury that I did not have however, considering my teaching workload and two young children, but writing was what I wanted and *want* to do and so: I made the time. That time was, and still is, nine o'clock every night, after the children are in bed and

the lunches are packed and the dishes are washed and the bags are ready for the next day. After the house settles into the quiet repose of slumber, I turn on the laptop again and sit in its accusatory glow.

One word after the next.

The slow steady plonk of the keys. That is all. It matters not if the words are rich or sensual or practical or prosaic. All that matters is that by writing for an hour every night, my novel will build. And it did.

The first book.

Then the second,

The third.

All different, all separate stories that I wanted to tell. That I wanted people to read.

I entered the Emirates Literature Festival First Fiction Competition over and over and eventually on my third attempt in 2018, I won second runner up for the opening of my second novel. The hours spent on writing after a full day teaching; the

heavy burden of marking essays and then having to sit down and open that laptop again, the struggle of planning and typing and drafting, after doing the exact same thing all day with the work of others...all of it was worth it in that moment to think that perhaps this was the start of my journey towards a career in writing.

However, what I did not realise at the time was that I was already knee deep in a never-ending struggle and, like a particularly frustrating muddy road, I would be waist deep years later, still not able to reach the publishing destination that I had pinpointed for myself on the map. And so, when my first rejection came from a literary agency regarding this particular book; I took it hard.

With students, my comments about their writing are formative and encouraging. In the publishing world, this is not the case, and I will never forget the bluntness of that first rejection e-mail. It was a learning curve and a steep one at that. I had to grow a thick skin...quickly.



Teaching, as a profession, encompasses a person wholly. Lessons are performances where we expend high energy on repeat six or seven sessions a day for the betterment of the students. In a highly academic independent school such as mine, the work that the students produce also takes time to read, takes hours to edit and even longer to add feedback to, and all of this takes away from my own creative process.

Determined to plough forwards, I started a new book, a new story and I have done this every time I have faced rejection. I plough on. Resilience is key, not only because I want to write and my job is all encompassing, but also in the way that I feel more able to talk about the writing process with my students. The more I write, the more I learn; about plot, dialogue, characters but also about empathy and understanding.

I recently achieved a Distinction on my MA in Creative Writing from Manchester Metropolitan University and I honestly believe it's the best CPD I have ever done. I am more able to understand exactly how difficult writing is in its many shapes and forms, which provides me with empathy for the students I teach. I am more creative in my day-to-day practice and I am able to talk about failure on a personal level as I have been writing and failing now for nearly a decade.

Or have I really been failing?

Yes to the publishing deal (although I'm hopeful that my latest novel may be the story that sparks an agent's interest – there's always hope) but have I really failed myself? On reflection, what failure has taught me in terms of my teaching skills is unparalleled. I am more able to 'practise what I preach' in the classroom; it has given me an ability to connect with students' vulnerability during the creative process; it has

improved my ability to plan and edit – the key things that I want from my students when they write both creatively and analytically.

I have also learnt a lot about Literary Agents, Publishers, markets and trends and 'what will currently sell and 'what won't'. It does not always align with what I'm writing and that is not necessarily anything to do with *my* story.

Thus, my writing odyssey is rather like the ship stuck between Scylla and Charybdis. It is a long journey and one where I feel myself dragged and pulled between the never-ending administrative tasks of a full-time teacher and my need to write. One where I often feel overwhelmed with rejection and failure. And yet, it is also one where the journey itself opens up new thoughts, new practices and new horizons within the confines of my classroom walls.

Support the mental health and wellbeing of your school

The Mental Health of Children and Young People report* published by NHS England found that more than 20% of 8 to 16-year-olds had a probable mental health disorder. Among 17 to 19-year-olds, the proportion was even higher at more than 23%.

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The programme is delivered by teachers with lived experience from working at St Andrew's Healthcare's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services College.

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St Andrew's School Mental Wellness Programme

www.stah.org/lightbulb



*The Mental Health of Children and Young People in England report was last published in 2023. To read in full, visit www.digital.nhs.uk



"LightBulb helped us to spot potential problems early, which was really helpful."

Deputy Headteacher



It Shouldn't Happen to a Vet...



Professor Roger K.W. Smith, Professor of Equine Orthopaedics, The Royal Veterinary College.

.... how education fashioned a career in veterinary medicine.

I never thought about being a veterinary surgeon (or 'veterinarian') until one of my school chums gave me the James Herriot books to read. I had always been interested in animals but the stories of the people in those books illuminated a world to which I was instantly attracted. Being half-way through my Maths, Physics and Chemistry A-levels, the first hurdle was finding a University which would take me, having not taken Biology. Fortunately, my first choice University wasn't concerned and so I applied to Cambridge University. I did seventh term entry which meant I had my A level results at the time of the interview and I was offered an unconditional place. This took the pressure off and I free-wheeled for a while, enjoying life at Bishops Stortford College as a third year sixth former, until something clicked and I thought I might as well try to do well in the entrance exams, mainly, I think, to avoid being an embarrassment!

While I struggled with the Maths, the inspirational teaching of my physics master (Mr. Ian Taylor) resulted in my getting a scholarship to Jesus College and my veterinary career had a green light!

Then realisation sank in ... I had elected to become a veterinarian but actually had no idea, other than what I had learned from James Herriot of life as a veterinarian before the second world war, and things may have changed! I therefore decided to find out in my year off. I visited a rural practice on the south coast and was 'assigned' to one of the senior vets on my first day there. Off we went to see a variety of farm-related calls (never a horse though – see later) before returning briefly to the surgery for the vet to remove some 'dew claws' from a number of puppies – a very rapid procedure with minimal bleeding ... but I almost went out like a light! I was mortified and thought my career was over before it got started. However, when I mentioned this experience to a farmer's wife, who was quizzing me at the last call of the

day, the vet overheard me and later told me not to worry because it won't happen again! ... and it hasn't! It was thanks to those careful words from that vet that I continued to strive to be a vet – what an impact!

The Cambridge veterinary course is six years compared to the five years at the other veterinary schools but this enabled me to use the third year to get involved in research which was a 'closed book' to me at the time but that year influenced my subsequent career choices significantly. Both that year and the clinical years were inspired by my mentors at the University – lecturers who, through their passion for their subject and their methods of imparting knowledge, moulded my interests and hence my career paths. It made me realise how valuable and influential good teachers are and without those mentors I would not be where I am now.

So, I finished university with a desire to 'get stuck into' general practice within a rural environment, with nascent desires to combine work with



horses and research. I began work at a mixed practice in Towcester where I quickly learnt the importance of teamwork. It was a great practice, which was highly supportive of me as a junior vet, wet behind the ears, but with one problem ... they did not do horse-work. Even my purchasing a flat cap to appeal to horse-owners didn't seem to increase my appeal and so, when offered a job at a well-known equine hospital practice, I reluctantly left the friendly practice to focus on horses.

During the next 2 years, I loved the job – everything was a new experience and I had a great team to work with and learn from – one of whom I have remained in touch throughout my subsequent career. I was learning every day from my superiors and I loved it. I often hear from veterinary students that equine clients are the worse, but I have so many fond memories of the clients who welcomed me onto their yards without any signs of disappointment that the senior vet had not been sent, and I was very grateful for that – it helped build my confidence. There

are so many stories from those times but maybe that is for a subsequent installment?

After this time, I realised that my main interest was surgery. The practice welcomed one of my lecturers from my University days to come and do surgery at the practice (he had become, and still is, one of the best equine orthopaedic surgeons in... the... world, as Jeremy Clarkson would say!). So, the same lecturer, having first instilled a desire to work with horses as a student, had a second influence in fostering in me an interest to become an equine surgeon.

Many of the public do not realise that veterinary medicine has evolved during my career to cater for specialisation. I therefore applied for, and ultimately, after a few failed attempts, got a residency training programme in equine surgery at the Royal Veterinary College, the largest veterinary school in the UK, and the oldest English-speaking veterinary school (the French beat us to it, but the same guy who set up the oldest

veterinary school in Lyon, France, fled the revolution to do the same in London .. and The Royal Veterinary College was born in Camden in 1796).

So, I was back in full time education, but those three years training to be an equine surgeon relit that interest in research from the years before at Cambridge University and I embarked in a PhD immediately at the end of my surgical training. I kept my newly acquired surgical knowledge going by working on the out-of-hours rota to operate on horses with colic overnight and then go into the lab the next morning, with a 'greasy spoon' breakfast in between along with students and interns. Many of those students remind me of those breakfasts as a highlight of their education when I have met them again as qualified vets!

My research into tendons during my PhD led me to work with some amazing minds, not least my residency and PhD supervisor, Dr. Peter Webbon at the RVC, and Professor Dick Heinegard at the

University of Lund in Sweden. This was the age of the budget airline and I benefitted from the early Ryanair flights flying to Sweden – most of the time I was one of only a handful of people on the flights compare that to Ryanair flights now!

The PhD taught me so many skills that I have used during my subsequent career and my trips to Sweden were so enriching, both educationally and culturally. Whenever I felt disheartened later during my career I would always gravitate back to Prof. Heinegard in Sweden to ‘recharge my intellectual batteries’ and I was bereft when he died all too young in 2013.

After my PhD I was fortunate to be able to stay on at The Royal Veterinary College for my ‘dream’ job of equine surgery and research and that is what I have done for the next 30+ years, with a 50% split between providing specialist orthopaedic diagnosis and surgery at the Royal Veterinary College and running a research group investigating tendon disease. My first three years at Cambridge University involved combined lectures with the medical students which fostered an interest in ‘One Medicine’ – the mutual benefit that research can contribute to tackling human and animal disease, and this not only helped me to develop medical-veterinary research collaborations in future years, but also found me a wife, Dr. Stephanie Smith (yes, Smith was also her maiden name). Her support over the years, tolerating unexpected extra demands of the job meaning I missed family appointments and frequently didn’t come home because of the 24/7 demands of clinical work. I consider myself really fortunate that, in spite of my focus on my career, I have remained married and both my children still seem to like me!

Most of my research has used the horse as a model of human tendon disease with the aim of helping both species. One of the highlights has



been being the first to develop a stem cell treatment for the treatment of tendon injuries in horses (one of the most common injuries in athletic horses) as well as humans.

During the last 35 years at The Royal Veterinary College, I have ‘crossed the road’ and become first and lecturer and then a Professor where I have been fortunate to help educate a large number of very talented young veterinary students and also those wanting to become veterinary specialists. I regularly think of those educators who inspired me and thank my lucky stars that I was so fortunate

to have come under their influence when I did – from the early days at public school, through University as an undergraduate, and then as a post-graduate at The Royal Veterinary College and the University of Lund. Would I have planned it? No, but the journey has been exhilarating, obviously with difficult times as well, but coping with those has been part of the experience.

My conclusion – embrace education, go along with it, and grasp those opportunities when they arise!

Nurturing Girls for the Future



Susan Roberts, Head of Prep School & Nursery at Norwich High School for Girls GDST.

The Power of an All-Through Education: Nurturing Girls for the Future.

At Norwich High Prep School and Nursery, we have crafted an educational journey uniquely tailored to help girls thrive academically and personally. More than just a curriculum, our approach instils the confidence, resilience and adaptability necessary to navigate an ever-evolving world. Our all-through approach ensures a continuous, coherent educational experience that nurtures each girl's potential from her first days in Prep to her final days in Sixth Form.

We are part of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), a family of 26 schools dedicated to providing exceptional education tailored specifically for girls. With the recent GDST Insights Report highlighting the benefits of an all-girls education, we are proud of our all-through model, which seamlessly transitions girls from their formative years in Early Years and Prep to Senior School and Sixth Form. This structured yet flexible pathway ensures they develop a strong sense of identity, a love of learning and the critical skills needed for success in further education and beyond.

The GDST Insights Report: Designing the Future of Girls' Education

The GDST Insights Report offers a comprehensive framework to enhance girls' education, focusing on three core principles:

- *Classroom: Advocates for creating empowering environments where girls are encouraged to voice their opinions, take intellectual risks and build confidence, thereby bridging the authority gap between genders.*
- *Curriculum & Co-Curriculum: Emphasizes the need for a forward-thinking curriculum that dismantles stereotypes, particularly in STEM*

and sports and cultivates essential skills such as leadership, financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

- *Culture: Highlights the importance of a school culture dedicated to empowering girls, utilising internal and external female role models to inspire and help them envision their potential without gender-based limitations.*

This report serves as a vital guide for educators, parents and communities committed to fostering girls' growth, confidence and ambition.

www.gdst.net/gdst-insights-report/

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A Seamless Educational Journey

Our innovative approach ensures that every stage of our girls' education is interconnected, providing a strong foundation for future learning and personal growth. In the Prep School and Nursery, the Compass Approach is a holistic framework designed to guide girls' development, focusing on four key strands:

- **Building Community:** Fostering a sense of belonging where girls are seen, heard and valued, appreciating differences and supporting one another.
- **Nurturing Confidence:** Encouraging self-assurance, allowing girls to express themselves authentically and shine in their unique strengths.
- **Embracing Challenge:** Promoting resilience by stepping out of comfort zones, facing challenges with determination and learning from setbacks.
- **Inspiring Change:** Empowering girls to aim high, make a difference

and understand that mistakes are opportunities for growth.

This approach underpins the curriculum and school culture, preparing students to contribute positively to their communities.

As girls transition to the Senior School, our ACTIVE approach picks up these strands and ensures students develop key skills for future success: Adaptable, Community-minded, Technologically mature, Independent, Visionary, and Eager to learn. Integrated across the curriculum, it encourages resilience, innovation and lifelong learning. The Senior School's rewards system and teaching strategies reinforce these attributes, ensuring students develop the mindset needed to thrive in an evolving world.

In Sixth Form, the VELOCITY framework equips students with a toolkit and values to maximise their impact. It fosters Vision, Effort, Leadership, Organisation,

Changemakers, Integrity, Technique, and a Yet mindset. By developing these qualities, students build resilience, take initiative and prepare for future success with purpose and confidence.

Together, the Compass, ACTIVE, and VELOCITY frameworks create a smooth transition as girls progress through their educational journey, ensuring consistency in their personal and academic development.

How Girls Learn

At Norwich High Prep School, we place as much value on how our girls learn as what they learn. Our teaching philosophy encourages active participation, ensuring that learning is not just about absorbing facts but about questioning, imagining and innovating.

We foster an environment where girls feel comfortable taking risks and trying new things without fear of failure. As one Year 4 parent shared: "Every girl is valued and given the

chance to contribute. Effort and determination are commended over natural ability. Girls are given space and a safe environment to be curious and try new things without judgement or fear of failure.”

This ethos has not only resulted in happy and confident pupils but has also led to a significant increase in new families joining our school. In 2023/24, we received serious mid-year interest from over 100 girls across Early Years and Prep, with an impressive 71% conversion rate into new enrolments. This growth is largely driven by word-of-mouth recommendations, demonstrating the strong sense of community and trust in our educational approach.

Character Development: The Heart of Our School

We believe that character education is as important as academic achievement. Our Prep School Qualities for Learning—Amira Ambition, Cara Creativity, Ivy Independence, Dita Determination, Rita Resilience, Cora Curiosity, Priya Problem Solving, and Cleo & Collette Collaboration—are embedded throughout the curriculum, ensuring that girls not only gain knowledge but also develop the personal attributes necessary for success.

By promoting active thinking and learning and consciously incorporating critical thinking into the curriculum through newly introduced subjects like Global Perspectives and flipped learning tasks, our girls are given opportunities to develop the Qualities in their everyday learning. This ensures that our girls gain the skills necessary to thrive in a fast-moving world as they are encouraged to think critically, embrace challenges and develop a growth mindset.

“Making these essential skills explicit, empowers our girls to take ownership of their development and become proactive learners, honing the skills they need for the Senior



School. In mixed classrooms girls have a tendency to take a back seat, becoming passive learners and it is a joy to see new starters grow in confidence to really engage in the tasks as they justify, interpret, analyse, evaluate and problem solve alongside their peers. Their parents will often talk about how much their daughters are enjoying their learning since joining the Prep School.”

Susan Roberts, Head of Norwich High Prep School and Nursery

A Community of Role Models

At Norwich High Prep, we understand the power of positive role models in shaping young minds. Our school fosters an environment where girls empower each other, creating a culture of mutual support and encouragement. As the older girls engage with younger ones through everything from Playground Pals and Little Swim Leaders to House Captains and an Enterprise Day with Year 5 and Year 10 working together, we ensure that every pupil sees herself reflected in leadership roles.

Through collaborative projects and community engagement, our girls learn the value of teamwork and social responsibility. Events such as the Winter Arts Festival bring our community together, showcasing talent, creativity and the spirit of collaboration that defines our school.

Prepared for the Future

We know that the world our girls will enter after school is dynamic and unpredictable. By embedding adaptability, creativity and leadership into their learning journey, we equip them with the skills needed to succeed in higher education and beyond.

“Our aim is to nurture confident, independent young women who leave Norwich High ready to embrace challenges and make a meaningful impact in the world. Our all-through model ensures that girls develop a strong sense of self, a lifelong love of learning and the skills needed to lead with purpose.”

Alison Sefton, Head of Norwich High School for Girls

At Norwich High School, we are not just preparing girls for exams; we are preparing them for life. By fostering curiosity, resilience and a love of learning, we empower our pupils to become the leaders, innovators and changemakers of tomorrow.

Our school is Made by Girls—shaped by their experiences, their ambitions and their boundless potential.

Susan Roberts, Head of Prep School & Nursery at Norwich High School for Girls GDST

www.norwichhigh.gdst.net/
01603 453 265

Chartered College of Teaching



Jenna Crittenden is Teacher Advocacy and Rethinking Curriculum Lead. She was a primary teacher and headteacher before joining at the Chartered College in 2022.

How the Chartered College of Teaching is supporting schools for primary-age pupils to rethink their Curriculum.

Who are the Chartered College of Teaching and what do they do?

The Chartered College of Teaching is the professional body for teachers. We are working to empower a knowledgeable and respected teaching profession through membership and accreditation. We do this by bridging the gap between practice and research and equipping teachers with the knowledge and confidence to make the best decisions for their pupils.

We also play a key role in supporting the profession in shaping the future of teaching through engagement with policymakers, consultations, and advocacy work. We are proud to voice an unequivocally positive discourse for teaching, supporting our profession to benefit other teachers, students, and society.

The Rethinking Curriculum Project

As part of the work with teachers, we have been delighted to lead a long-term curriculum project funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust called Rethinking Curriculum.

In 2022 we surveyed over 1000 current classroom practitioners and leaders and asked them about the current curriculum picture in their schools, and their thoughts around these. Only 2% of teachers reported that they were able to fully implement their ideal curriculum in their schools; a massive 98% therefore feeling they were unable to deliver what they felt was appropriate for their cohorts in some way. 15% felt strongly that could not deliver any element of their ideal curriculum for their children. On top of this 95% of schools said they experienced barriers to implementing and developing curriculum work effectively, citing reasons such as lack of funding, resourcing of specialist equipment, inspection frameworks and external examination pressures as the reasons. 72% of respondents felt that their school focussed solely on a knowledge based curriculum but only 3% of



respondents felt that this approach was the 'ideal' for their cohorts.

These depressing figures identified some key 'blockers' to schools embedding and developing ongoing curriculum work that satisfied the needs of their cohorts and gave us a really exciting opportunity to do something to help. Rethinking Curriculum was born and through work with focus groups and curriculum experts we developed an ambitious aim :

'The project aims to support and equip teachers and school leaders with the knowledge and skills to identify, plan and implement curriculum development work in a sustainable, context-specific and

impactful approach. This will mean that all pupils will have access to an expansive, inspiring curriculum that connects them with local communities and enables them to lead healthy, fulfilled lives.'

We opened recruitment for five representative primary schools across the country in the hope we would get the number of applications we needed. We got over 1000 in a short space of time, exemplifying the thirst for support in this area. After rigorous rounds of interviews and applications, we finally agreed on six schools: two very small schools in Cumbria, a large two-form entry inner city school in Newcastle, a large Catholic school in Croydon, a three-form infant school in Kent, and a single form primary in Berkshire. These schools would become co-design partners, working with us and a research team at The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Pedagogy at UCL to identify the key steps needed to implement curriculum development work and trial various supporting materials in the process.

What have we developed so far that can help you with your own curriculum development work?

Alongside the intensive work in pilot schools, we knew that the primary community were also looking for support. Through our initial research, we identified that schools were interested in various curriculum approaches and that they felt overwhelmed by the task of engaging with research around these and knowing where to start. In response we developed 7 toolkits for primary practitioners, a one-stop shop, with a research review, evaluation tool, case studies, resource banks, national curriculum linking frame and webinar recordings to help schools begin their own journey of curriculum development. These have been very successful and over 10000



schools have engaged with these to date. These are all freely available on the *Rethinking Curriculum* webpage so do take a look!

These are currently focussed upon:

- Oracy,
- Pupil Agency and Voice
- Sustainability and Climate Education
- Outdoor and Nature-based learning
- Play and Continuous provision
- Experiential learning
- Place-based and community

We are currently developing content for two further toolkits for Creativity and The Arts that are set to launch in September 2025.

We also developed a curriculum evaluation framework as a central tool to begin to identify where to start your work as a school. It is not designed to be used as a scoring tool or a checklist for curriculum but aims instead to guide your curriculum development journey. To help you reflect meaningfully on where your school is currently; to offer suggestions and insights that may help you achieve your curriculum vision; and to prompt collective reflection and discussion within your school teams. We have drawn on what we have learned from working with schools, from research and evidence,

and from a range of education experts to offer potential solutions to some of these challenges, and to unpick the specific features or activities that might be most pertinent to think about when 'Rethinking Curriculum' in your setting.

We have captured this within seven key principles, each of which provides a different lens through which to think deeply about your school curriculum. Each principle is typically divided into two sub-themes for which you are presented with:

- A snapshot of key ideas, drawn from research and evidence, which you can use to evaluate current practice against;
- Common barriers to success to be aware of;
- Reflective questions to guide self-reflection, team reflection, and which you can use to engage staff in curriculum discussions.

This evaluation framework is not the finished product, nor does it provide a definitive approach to curriculum development. There may be gaps or omissions and this should be viewed as a work in progress which we will aim to develop further as the evidence-base evolves. This tool is freely downloadable.

What is next?

We know our work is far from over and now that we are moving past our pilot phase, we are working to develop course materials and pathways to support subject and middle leaders in schools. We know that the role is complex and that practitioners are often overwhelmed, and we aim to support leaders in this.

We are also focussing hard on developing policy-level influence to remove or mitigate some of the key challenges to curriculum development that often inhibit schools. We provide regular roundtable opportunities with MPs, members of The Teaching Commission, DfE for our members and advocate for their voices within policy-level discussions and through open consultations such as the

curriculum review. We will also be releasing a report around the 'State of Curriculum' in due course to highlight the current picture in our schools.

Curriculum and our agency to deliver what is purposeful and impactful for our communities is so important and one we would love you to support by being part of the Rethinking Curriculum community.

The SATIPS' Challenge

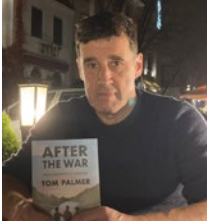
After another successful year our venerable quizmaster, Harry Paget, is hanging up his robes.

We are looking for one or two enthusiastic people to take on the role.

This is a chance to make a real difference; a wonderful opportunity to enable pupils to showcase their knowledge and enthusiasm, and all without an electronic device in sight!!

For further information or to get in touch about the role please contact: Paul Jackson or email info@satips.org

Dear Peter



Author *Tom Palmer* writes a very personal letter to Peter – his ‘third Dad’.

You became my third dad – my step-dad – when you married my mum. I was five.

Three dads is a lot and it was confusing.

Dad one was just seventeen and – with my birth mother, 16 – he gave me up for adoption. Dad two adopted me when I was nearly one and left when I was three.

But let’s not dwell on him: let’s talk about you.

I called you Peter to your face, though I always referred to you as ‘my dad’ to other people.

Did you know that? I have no idea if you did.

Anyway... this letter is an attempt to acknowledge that, a long time after all of that, I have come to understand what a dad should be.

And, therefore, that you were my Dad.

I am a writer now.

Did you see that coming? My job being a writer. It’s a serious question. Because I didn’t see it coming.

I have written 65 books so far. Mostly for children. There are lots of threads that twist their way through my books. War. Sport. Friendship. And Dads.

Dads. Dads. Dads. My books are full of dads.

Dads that try to help their daughters excel at sport. Dads who make sacrifices for their children. Dads that disappear. Dads that encourage their children. Dads that don’t. Dads who read with their sons. Dads that haunt their sons. Dads that get brain tumours and have an operation that goes wrong so that they are paralysed and can’t speak for the six months that it takes for them to die and whose children try to look after them and their widow and like to think they did a good job, but know, deep down, they could have done better.

I gave two of my characters a dad who suffered exactly what you suffered. What we suffered. But they survive. And thrive. Like I did.

What sort of a dad were you, then? You were a man of hobbies. Every few months you took on a new passion. When I was really young you painted ironware in the style of canal boat art. You did sculpture every Thursday night in town with Mum. Clay. Wood. Stone.

When we got central heating you turned the old coal hole in the cellar in to a photography development room. You took photos of old buildings and birds. I wasn’t that interested. Until you, although you were not a football fan at all, you started taking photos

at professional football games. Then I became your eager assistant.

You set up woodworking bench in the cellar. With a vice and saws and hammers. It was noisy. I was interested. One of your first big projects was to build a second woodworking table next to yours.

You took me fishing. First on Ullswater from a rowing boat. Then on the banks of the River Ure. Sometimes off the harbour in Craster. I really liked fishing with you.



I will never forget going to the fishing tackle shop on the way to the harbour on our first sea fishing day and you buying a proper sea rod and me being cross that you only bought one only for yourself, then, when we got to the end of the harbour, you handed the new rod to me. Your existing river rod was strong enough for the sea, you said. I was the one who needed the new rod.

You took me to castles. I liked castles.

You liked riding horses up the fells in Cumbria. I did it once and hated it. You said I didn't have to do it if I didn't like it.

You built a little wooden yacht and named it Gandalf. You taught me to row. You taught my sisters to sail, but I didn't like sailing, so you didn't make me do that.

You didn't make me read Tolkien, either. You didn't make me read anything. I hated reading. But you and Mum paid for the local newspaper with its football pages and two football magazines to be delivered every week. I became a reader. Magazines. Newspapers. Ceefax.

You let me borrow your books when I finally got into reading books. But you never forced it. I got through a fair few of your books. Then you died.

And, although we didn't have you, we

had your books. Hundreds of them. Books by great twentieth century authors from France and Russia and Germany. Like Albert Camus, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Gunther Grass. After you died I went to university and studied Modern European Literature. My dissertation was about Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment.

I would have liked you to read it.

We used to play a board game called Kingmaker. It was about those castles we visited and the wars that had been fought over them. I loved that game. You used to let me bend the rules and win. I still have the game. One day I am going to write a book called Kingmaker and it will be about you.

While we did all that fishing and castle-visiting and woodworking, I suppose we must have talked. Maybe not much. I can't remember. But, whatever it was we talked about or didn't talk about, you got to me.

I can see it now. How you did it. What you did to help make me who I am.

Of the three dads I had you are the one I try to be like.

As a dad I have tried to do stuff with my daughter that she wanted to do, to support her. I have tried to be a good dad. I have tried hard and often not got it right. I am still trying.

I watched you being a husband to my mum, too.

You were a good husband. You had your moments. Like all couples do. You were flawed, imperfect. But that was a lesson to me, too. I am flawed. I am imperfect. But it doesn't mean I can't start every day and try and be good at being a husband, like you did.

On being a husband... my wife's not well now. Just like your wife wasn't well after you died and you came to me in a dream.

That dream.

Around a year after you died I had a dream about you. You told me – quite severely – that I needed to do more to support Mum, that I was not looking after her like you would have looked after her if you were still alive. She was ill, too, now. Though we didn't know how ill. You said I needed to stop being selfish.

And you were right. I was being selfish. I wasn't being the son I needed to be. The son you needed me to be in your absence.

You died when I was 21. Mum died when I was 24. I had the dream between your two deaths.

I don't believe that the dead talk to the living. And neither did you. That means that the dream I had was not your ghost talking to me, but that I was hearing whatever it was you gave to me between the ages of 5 and 21.

There. That's my letter to you. To say thank you.

I can't help, while writing it, but wonder. What if my daughter writes a letter to me when I am dead. What is she going to say to me? How do I want her to remember me, think of me?

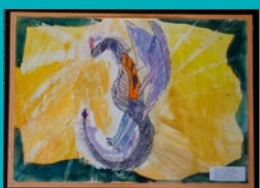
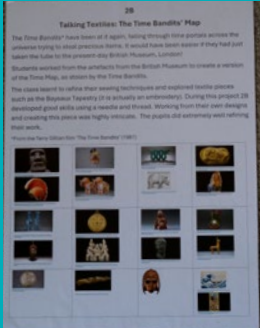
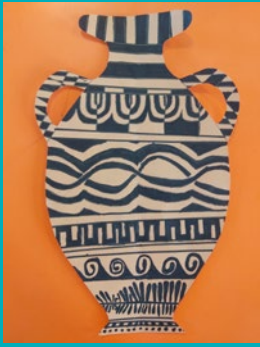
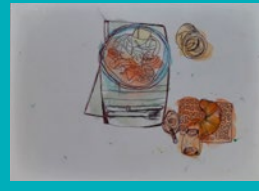
I remember you well. You were a good dad.

Tom



Moreton Hall







Several SATIPS schools from around the country sent their best prep school art work to us, and alongside work from our own prep school, we curated a thematic exhibition. Colour and joy were hoped for and it didn't fail to deliver. All media was represented from ceramics to wire work and large mixed pieces to giant collaborative wall hangings.

Showcased in the Holroyd Community Theatre located at Moreton Hall, the exhibition began with an official opening ceremony and a private viewing for friends and family of

the artists involved. On Sunday, the exhibition welcomed the general public, allowing the wider community to appreciate the remarkable talent being showcased from young artists from across the UK.

'Best art exhibition ever!'

'10/10! Amazing creativity. Well done to all involved – especially the children. Wow!'

'Wonderful exhibition. We travelled from Hillingdon, West London, to see our daughter's work from St. Helen's College. Lovely experience.'



'Fantastic, diverse and creative exhibition. Credit to SATIPS and Moreton Hall.'

'I just need to say what an utterly beautiful SATIPS exhibition it was. It was so colourful, and the vibe was uplifting. Amazing work, showing a huge amount of energy and creativity. It honestly was one of the most beautiful exhibitions I have been to'

Moreton Hall then welcomed a number of local Prep School pupils to workshops led by Moreton's own experienced art practitioners.

Michael Brewer, Principal at Moreton Hall, expressed his excitement about hosting the event for the second year, stating:

"We were absolutely thrilled to be hosting the SATIPS Art Exhibition at Moreton Hall. This event offers young, aspiring artists the incredible opportunity to have their artwork showcased to a wider audience. It is a celebration of creativity, expression, and talent, and we are honoured to be part of it."

Jan Miller, Teacher of Art at Moreton Hall and SATIPS Art Broadsheet editor commented:

"This exhibition is a testament to the passion and dedication of the next generation of artists."

The Art Exhibition baton is handed over to another prep school for the next two years. We look forward to sending them our work and seeing how they choose to curate SATIPS Art Exhibition 2026.

Writing *Calm*: an English Teacher's Journey to Publication



Susan Baker teaches English at a school in East Yorkshire.

When I was 10, my class did a project on the Tudors. I can still remember the binder I made: two sheets of cardboard covered with purple paper; holes carefully punched for the treasury tags to go through; lettering in special gold ink with a glued-on Tudor rose on tracing paper. I was fascinated by King Henry and his six tragic wives; the sickly Edward; Bloody Mary and her sister, the Virgin Queen.

So fascinated, in fact, that I began my first novel. It was called 'The Confessions of Protestant Priest', and it began in highly dramatic if not altogether original fashion, with my narrator tied to the stake, the flames licking around his feet, as the church bells tolled the death of Queen Mary and a messenger galloped up urgently crying, "Reprieve! Reprieve!"

I don't think I ever wrote beyond that opening chapter – and the manuscript is (like the purple-covered, golden-titled project itself) lost to time. All too soon, Big School took over and the years galloped by as swiftly as my fictional messenger – O Levels and A Levels, an English Literature degree, a PGCE in English and Drama. The desire to tell stories never left me, but life was very full, with parenthood and a teaching career; writing scripts for the school Drama Club was as near as I got to publication.

Then, in 2016, my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. My father, nearly ninety, was her sole carer, so I began a regular, fortnightly journey on the train from Yorkshire to Kent at weekends, to support him with her care. And suddenly, I had guilt-free writing time. I hunched over my laptop in the train carriage, radiating 'do not disturb', and I began my young adult novel, *Calm*.

Calm took shape over these long journeys and over a period of some years. It is a dystopian novel, inspired in part by the extraordinary variety of the British countryside, through

which my characters flee, and in part by speculating about the kind of totalitarian government we might plausibly experience in Britain. I thought of all those clichés about the British – keep a stiff upper lip; keep calm and carry on – and I imagined a world in which a government, struggling to keep order, *imposed* calm via a drug in the drinking water. The resulting society is ordered, free of prejudice, and without strong feelings of any kind. As one of my characters says, 'No passion, no joy, no delight. No hate, no anger, no—tribes.' Unless, that is, the drug fails to work on you. This is a society which will not tolerate Resistance, as my two young protagonists discover to their peril.

I completed *Calm* in the summer of 2019. That autumn, we began a weekly Reading Enrichment lesson for KS3 students at school, and my generous – not to say trusting – Head of Department allowed me to read my manuscript to a Year 9 class. To begin with, I claimed it was written by a friend who wanted feedback, but they soon guessed I was fibbing. We finished it just before schools closed in the pandemic, and to my delight and

surprise, they loved it, one student telling me it was her favourite book ever. Buoyed by their encouragement, I began to submit it to agents.

Young Adult Dystopia, I was told more than once, was a Crowded Market. One agent, reviewing my submission package, told me that publishers were no longer looking for this genre. When I replied that my students still read dystopias avidly, she said it was not a question of what students wanted to read, it was what publishers wanted to publish. And yet I was sure that there was still an appetite for books like mine – books which were page-turners and exciting, yes, but more importantly books that allowed young people to explore difficult and dangerous situations, to enter imaginatively into some of the darker areas of human experience and behaviour, from a safe perspective. Ursula le Guin, that great writer of fantasy, once wrote, ‘we read books to find out who we are’. In an increasingly uncertain world, where the touch of a screen can reveal the worst of human nature, our young people can be encouraged to think about the sort of people they want to be through the fiction that they read.

The feedback wasn’t all discouraging: I wrote well, I was told; the premise was intriguing – but no firm offers. It was tempting to lose hope, until, two years after I first started submitting, an email from the Neem Tree Press, a small independent publisher, dropped into my inbox. Was I still seeking publication?

One of my great joys over the last year has been sharing the publication journey with my school. Ten of my GCSE students acted as beta readers, reading the novel in draft and giving formal feedback to the publisher. They joined me in September 2024 when the school threw a launch party for *Calm*, and I found myself in the school theatre one lunchtime with 200 students, all full of questions about the novel and writing and ideas and

publishing and dystopias. Children still stop me in the playground, asking how the novel is going and whether I’m writing another one; even better, children approach me to tell me they’ve started their own novels. The buzz around publication is infectious, as students realise that if someone they know, someone ordinary and familiar, can publish a novel, then maybe they can too.

Other highlights? My son, visiting London, sends me a photograph of *Calm* in Foyles, the famous London bookseller where, as a book-loving child, I was occasionally taken as a treat. My daughter, herself an English teacher, reports a spirited discussion in her classroom sparked by *Calm*

about what our lives would lose if we had no passions, along with the news that one of her students is writing *Calm*’s first piece of fan-fiction. Three schools, to my knowledge, have bought class sets, an early vote of confidence that still amazes me.

I have just finished the first draft of the sequel. I already have my young beta readers lined up!

‘*Calm*’ is available from bookshops or online; it is suitable for readers of 12+.

For a free teaching pack or to enquire about author visits, please contact her via email: sjbakerauthor@gmail.com or on Instagram: [@author_s.j.baker](https://www.instagram.com/author_s.j.baker)





MODERN LANGUAGES

Editor

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Bonjour, collègues,

Thanks to all of you who used the QR code to show an interest in joining our network and helping me create fun and engaging broadsheets for you all. I'm excited to continue building this resource with you!

With the Common Entrance writing examinations approaching soon, this term's broadsheet will focus on essential, high-impact techniques to help learners strengthen their writing skills that are crucial to their success in our subject.



SCAN ME



Teaching Writing in Your Lessons: Back to Basics!

1. Prioritise High-Frequency Words

Encourage your students to master the 100 most common words in the target language (TL). These transversal words are not topic-specific (and often not cognates), making them more challenging to learn. But then again, I never ask my students to learn any words from English to the TL as recognising them from the TL to English is enough for both the listening and reading exams.

Why it works:

- ✓ Simplifies sentence construction
- ✓ Improves comprehension
- ✓ Reduces cognitive load during writing tasks

How to implement it:

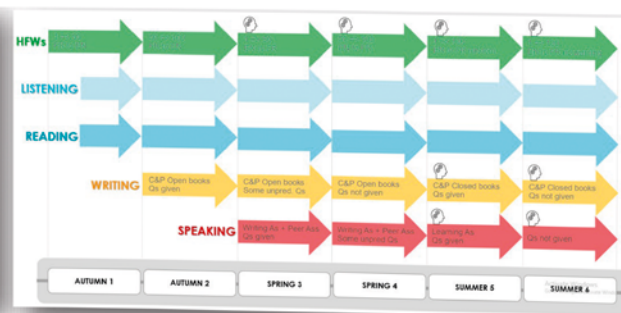
- Build short daily starter activities using these 100 words
- Consistently use these words when speaking the TL in lessons
- Create flashcard sets (physical or via Quizlet)
- Use Kahoot or Blooket to help your students memorise them
- Organise regular mini-tests from French to English before English to French, to assess the organisation and motivation early in the year, not just memory

SATIPS

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Y8F: 100 MPW

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MODERN LANGUAGES

2. Writing Technique ONE: Scaffold Sentence Building

Help students expand from basic to more complex structures using sentence-stretching routines. Think of this as linguistic Lego: start with a block, then build upward.

Challenge students to:

- ✓ Add a time phrase
- ✓ Include opinions
- ✓ Add reasons and details
- ✓ Use a different tense

Example:

- Je vais au parc.
- Je vais au parc avec mes amis.
- Après l'école, je vais souvent au parc avec mes amis pour jouer au foot.

This gradual expansion builds grammatical awareness and confidence. You can also adapt this technique for less confident students by using fill-in-the-gaps activities or 'change the underlined words' tasks.

3. Writing Technique TWO: Copy & Paste Strategy

One technique I favour is what I call Copy & Paste: building paragraphs packed with high-frequency words and familiar cognates.

How it works:

Guide students through the following steps:

- ✓ Plan your answers in English first, focusing on real experiences e.g. what they actually do on weekends,
- ✓ Try to have three small paragraphs for each answer

- ✓ Use English words that can easily be translated into the TL

Memorise each paragraph by using the following steps:

- 1/French to English (*Speak*)
- 2/English to French (*Speak & Write*)
- 3/French only

Example:

Le week-end prochain, je vais aller au parc où je vais jouer au football avec mon copain qui s'appelle Pierre. Je pense que ce sera super car j'aime ça !

=> 14 high-frequency words, four cognates, and one name!

While less obvious than scaffolding, this method encourages students to generate authentic sentences, helping them memorise content more meaningfully – as demonstrated in the paragraph samples written by my Year 5 and Year 6 students using this writing strategy, which are displayed opposite.

4. Embed Tense Practice in Writing

Students must demonstrate accurate use of past, present, and future tenses at 13+ Common Entrance exams. Mastery here impacts all three key areas of the mark scheme: Content and Communication, Linguistic Quality, and Accuracy.

Tips for class activities:

- ✓ Ask students to count and circle the number of verbs in each tense (aim for 5–6 per paragraph)
- ✓ Colour-code tenses in their template paragraphs
- ✓ Use games and online quizzes to focus on spelling and pronunciation of verbs

5. Introduce "Wow" Phrases Early

Even Foundation-level students benefit from grade-boosting idiomatic phrases. Used sparingly and accurately, these phrases can elevate writing significantly.

Examples to teach explicitly:

- ✓ Après avoir mangé...
- ✓ Si j'avais le choix...
- ✓ Ce que j'aime le plus, c'est...
- ✓ Je ne pense pas que ce soit utile, mais...

Practice idea:

Create topic-based "phrase banks" (e.g., school, hobbies) for students to use in extended writing.

Important: remind students that using the subjunctive correctly is enough—they do not need to fully understand its formation at this stage.

6. Reinforce a Pre-Writing Checklist

Help students develop a habit of self-review using a simple checklist:

-  Are tenses used correctly?
-  Are opinions and connectives included?
-  Are spelling and accents accurate?
-  Do verbs agree with subjects?
-  Have I given enough details?

Final Thought

These strategies aren't flashy—but they are transformative. Consistent, low-pressure practice with core vocabulary, tense accuracy, and sentence-building techniques can turn even struggling writers into confident exam performers.

Writing

Write five short paragraphs in French answering the following points:

1. Say what you like or dislike at school and why.
2. Say what you have and don't have in your bag.
3. Describe yourself
4. Describe your dad or mother
5. Describe your favourite singer

1. Je vais à Merchant Taylors prep.
Ma leçon préférée est le Français et l'art. C'est chouette.
Cependant je n'aime pas les Maths, c'est ennuyeux. J'aime le Français parce que Mr Kopel est très drôle et j'aime l'art car Mr Roach est très gentil. Tous les jours j'ai le déjeuner à l'école. Quelquefois c'est délicieux mais je n'aime pas les saucisses de poulet. À l'école je fais le rugby mais je préfère le hockey.

2. Dans mon sac il y a une trousse, deux cahiers, quatre livres, trois stylos, une calculatrice, une gomme, deux classeurs, une règle, un bâton de colle, des chips, de l'eau, un chapeau, un feutre et une charge et des chocolats. Je n'ai pas des feutres mais c'est pas important.

3. Je m'appelle Leo. J'ai dix ans. J'ai les cheveux bruns et bruns les yeux. J'habite à Chordeuxwood en Angleterre. J'habite avec ma mère, mon père et mon frère. Mon frère a six ans. Je suis très poli, très généreux, gentil, modeste et assez intelligent mais je ne suis pas drôle. J'aime lire. Mon livre préféré est Artemis Fowl.

4. Ma mère s'appelle Justine. Elle est de taille moyenne et je crois qu'elle a 45 ans. Elle a des cheveux longs bruns et les yeux bruns. Je pense qu'elle est vraiment super!

5. S'appelle Mr Kopel et il chante sur YouTube. Il a les cheveux courts et il a des lunettes. Quand il est à l'école il est toujours patient et très gentil mais plus que ça il est très intelligent.

Writing

Write a paragraph about your town answering all the following bullet points: (do not put bullet points or numbers, this is just one long piece of writing)

- Décrire Londres et donner ton opinion.
- Quel est ton endroit préféré? Pourquoi?
- Où vas-tu normalement avec ta famille?
- Qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire dans ta ville?
- Que vas-tu faire le week-end prochain?

Londres est la capitale bien connue de l'Angleterre. Elle a beaucoup de grandes structures hautes comme le Shard et le Gherkin et elle est amicale à tous les touristes. Le pont de la tour passe sur la belle rivière de Tamise et s'ouvre lorsque les navires traversent. Quelques attractions les plus célèbres sont le London Eye, le palais de Buckingham, la tour de Londres, le Big Ben et plein d'autres. Des gens du monde entier visitent cette ville unique à voir ces monuments formidables. A mon avis cette

merveilleuse ville est l'endroit idéal pour être et rester pour qu'il y a beaucoup de choses à faire ici. Mon endroit préféré, à Londres c'est la London Eye. Cette roue extraordinaire tourne si lente qu'on peut prendre plaisir de la vue. Au sommet on peut profiter d'une vue panoramique d'ici sur la Tamise. J'aime cette attraction plus que les autres à cause de la vue exclusive de cette ville vibrante. Qui aurait pensé que une roue métallique pourrait être si populaire! J'y vais au moins une fois par mois. Normalement, c'est pendant le weekend que je suis libre. Alors je passe le temps avec ma famille. Plusieurs fois nous sortons pour un séjour dans la campagne. Dans notre ville, vous pouvez faire beaucoup de choses. En hiver, quelquefois il fait assez froid mais vous pouvez toujours faire une croisière fluviale à couper le souffle sur la Tamise ou

faire prendre un tour sur le London Eye. Incroyable. Aussi vous pouvez profiter d'une expérience unique de magasinage. Londres est pleine de magasins qui vendent tout ce que vous voudriez acheter. Londres a beaucoup d'attractions et vous ne serez jamais capable d'arrêter d'errer dans ses rues. Le weekend prochain j'ai l'intention d'aller à la pantomime classique 'la belle et le bête'. On m'a dit que c'est formidable et j'espère qu'il en est ainsi. La meilleure chose c'est que les examens (surtout) fini, alors je peux me reposer.

Voilà! (avec un smiley et un feedback given)

Vraiment excellent!

Bonne nuit bonne nuit! (avec un smiley)

Please don't hesitate to email me at info@raphaelkopel.com if you'd like to share with us your own writing techniques or resources. I'd be delighted to hear from you and share these!

Thanks to all of you who used the QR code (attached again in this broadsheet) to show interest in joining.



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The **BROADSHEETS**

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The Fear Factor in Leadership

FERGAL ROCHE

The Growth of Rugby School Group

GARETH PARKER-JONES

**Leader
-ship**



Reducing exam anxiety through plants

Exam time can be stressful for everyone. Spending time with plants is a simple yet powerful tool to support pupils' wellbeing during testing periods. **Exposure to plants**, whether through tending indoor plants, gardening or simply spending time in plant-filled environments, can help reduce stress, improve mood and restore attention.

Research also shows that natural environments help boost concentration and cognitive function, which are both key for exam and test preparation. Pausing to notice the surrounding natural world or natural elements provides a mental break from effortful thinking, which can enhance pupils' ability to focus on academic tasks. Even brief interactions with plants, such as caring for an **indoor plant** or walking in a **green area**, have been linked to improved attention and stress relief in children and teenagers.

We've included a few ideas below to help you get started:

Wellbeing Walks ~ Lavender Bags ~ Sensory Box ~ Wellbeing Toolkit

With warm wishes,

RHS Campaign for School Gardening

The Fear Factor in Leadership



Fergal Roche is a former teacher and headteacher who went on to build a successful career in business leadership. He founded *The Key* in 2007, growing it into one of the UK's leading support services for schools, capturing a 50% market share. Since stepping away from the company, Fergal has worked as an executive coach to senior leaders across sectors, served as a non-executive director for a range of organisations, and chaired multiple boards.

There is something very insidious about the way our drive and enthusiasm can so often be curbed once we are in place as a leader. We look around us and fear upsetting the apple cart with our thoughts and plans. We step out of the boat to walk on the water, but then we look around at the waves and the wind. What would my board think? What will my senior team think? Other companies are doing things the way we do, so why change?

It's worth doing a lot—and I mean a lot—of due diligence before stepping into a place of leadership. What am I being expected to do, and will I really have the backing to do it—from investors, the board, the chair, etc.? I have done a lot of work with leaders I coach, to map this out, as it is so critical. If I don't have the backing of my principal stakeholders, I am stepping into the furnace.

Transformational leadership is rarely centred on playing it safe. I'm not saying that we should be foolhardy or fail to take a measured and well-planned approach, but we certainly need to be courageous. Two weeks ago, I visited a primary school in Enfield, North London, where I saw something extraordinary amongst a student population that includes some of the most disadvantaged children in the country. The school recognises that no child can learn if they are not fed

and clothed. They find entrepreneurial ways to make this happen. For example, they have partnered with Greggs (remember all the talk about the vegan sausages?), who provide breakfasts for children who would otherwise go hungry at the start of the day. Somehow, they manage to find clothing for those families that lack the means to send their children to school in uniform. They work with the local community, charities, and local government to find accommodation for families facing destitution. Many children who have troubled backgrounds need to be taught how to play, how to work with others, how to enjoy small things, so teachers spend break times teaching them the games they themselves had learnt as children. By the way, those teachers are provided with rest time to make up for this. On Thursday evenings each week, the food bank provides for the needs of a long line of families.

Not once during my visit did I pick up any aren't-we-amazing, self-righteous, or paternalistic attitudes from the staff or the chair of the board (who spent several hours of my visit at the school). They just seemed to go about their carefully planned programme in a matter-of-fact way.

I sensed an extraordinary unity between the vision of the chair, the board, the headteacher, the teachers and associate teachers—even the head chef. In a follow-up interview with the vice-chair of the board, when I asked about the role of the board, he told me it is principally missionalistic—a word I hadn't come across before but understood immediately.

It was clear that a huge amount of time and effort had been put into setting out exactly what this organisation was going to do for its clients—in this case, students. I'll tell you straight away that the school achieves results in the top 2% nationally, despite two-thirds of students attracting the Pupil Premium—extra funding to cover the needs of disadvantaged children. The curriculum—that is, what the children are going to learn—is highly thought through and covered not just in lesson

time but at every minute of the day, including lunch, when children are asked to discuss the question of the day with those around them.

Staff are given what they require to do their jobs well. Teachers are provided with their materials - no need for DIY. Every six weeks, they carefully review with senior management which students need help if they are falling behind, so that tailored support can be provided throughout the next period.

Aspiration fills the atmosphere. Each class is named after the university that its teacher has attended, each year group according to the year its children are expected to enter university (or start their apprenticeship?). Former students regularly return to the school to share their achievements. Visitors from every walk of life and background (I was in a group with a Canadian entrepreneur, a civil servant from East Africa, and a teacher from the Netherlands) have their photos taken and put up on the wall—creating a giant fan club cheering on the current students. I could go on. As you can see, I was hugely taken by the outstanding commitment and provision I witnessed.

Yet I felt a deep sadness, as I drove away, that such schools, and their approaches, are still so far from the norm. And I can't help thinking that this is due more to fear than to any other factor when it comes to leadership.

The system conspires against bold leadership in Education. Its (predominantly lay) governors and trustees can be so fearful of failing to satisfy the schools regulator, Ofsted, that they reject any plan that appears to challenge orthodoxy. New heads fear developing a reputation that might challenge the wisdom of those who have gone before them. Those who make waves—in any sector—tend to attract criticism, envy, and often a subcurrent of oppositional and obstructive behaviour. Many of our boldest leaders have been forced to quit, often because they simply weren't careful enough—usually in building the support of key stakeholders. The murmurings across the sector hyper-inflate the damage to their reputations and livelihoods. Is it any wonder that transformational leadership is, in reality, so rarely seen?

In the case of our school system, the impact of all this is clear: thousands of children around the country are failing to receive the kind of support, ambition and drive, dedication, and professionalism that I saw at One Degree Academy.

Are you about to take up the post of CEO in an Academy Trust, or leader of a group of schools? Message me to register interest in joining a small group of people I will be supporting through their first six months in post.



The Growth of Rugby School Group



Gareth Parker-Jones has been Head Master of Rugby School since 2020. Here he talks about the growth of Rugby School Group following the recent merger with Aysgarth School.

In March this year, Rugby School announced a merger with Aysgarth, the successful prep school in Yorkshire, to take effect in July 2025.

Aysgarth will be the second prep school in Rugby School Group, joining nearby Bilton Grange Prep School, with which we merged in 2020. There are also three international schools in the Group - Rugby School Thailand, which opened in 2017; Rugby School Japan, which opened in 2023; and Rugby School Nigeria, which will open in September 2025.

Rugby School was founded in England in 1567 as a school for the boys of the town of Rugby and the surrounding area. Over the centuries we have come a long way from being the modest boys' school that invented rugby football. We now have 870 students and next year we will celebrate 50 years of girls in the School.

Ten years ago we had no plans for expansion and, in fact, had rejected several overtures from international organisations keen to enter into a franchise. However, we started to think about the potential benefits of partnerships with educationalists who shared our values, admired our 'Whole Person Whole Point' approach – one that incorporates academic excellence, a wide range of co-curricular activities (not paid-for extras), and a commitment to the care and wellbeing of children.

We also wanted them to become persuaded by what we believe is the transformative nature of a full boarding experience. In both Japan and Thailand this was a new phenomenon that needed careful explaining and reassurance but turned out to be attractive to families with two working parents, who worked long hours, whose jobs often required overseas travel, and who were troubled by their children's long commute to and from school.

Since the opening of Rugby School Thailand (a thriving school with around 1200 students) we have

become increasingly keen to teach and learn in a globally-minded way; in fact, this was one of the reasons why Rugby School decided to offer the IB as an alternative to A levels in 2021. We wanted all the students in the Group schools to be interested in each other and to benefit from exchanges and trips to each other's countries. (This can be an organisational challenge but real-time Teams lessons and chats can be useful and fun when time differences allow.)

We are only interested in genuine partnerships with organisations or individuals who share our vision and our ethos. Aysgarth School is such an organisation. It is a leading school in its area, some 190 miles from Bilton Grange so not competing for the same students.

Rugby enjoys a strong relationship with Aysgarth and many of its pupils have joined us for their secondary education. The collaboration between us strengthens our own ability to provide the highest quality education across the Group while maintaining

The **SATIPS** National Handwriting Competition 2025

This year's competition has now gone through the extensive judging process and we congratulate all the pupils who entered. They, quite rightly, will all have received a certificate for their efforts and we, in turn, have thanked their staff for giving them the opportunity to take part.

This year's winners, St Bernard's, Slough retain the trophy from last year with Beech Grove and Beechwood Park celebrating second and third place respectively. Beech Groves' disappointment at just missing the top spot will be tempered by their coming first in the staff category!

Once again, congratulations to all who took part and we look forward to receiving your entries in 2026.

Results 2025

5yrs

1st Alannah P	Beechwood Park
2nd Risha P	Beechwood Park
3rd Margo P	Beechwood Park

10yrs

1st Ira K	St Bernard's Prep
2nd Shrey A	St Bernard's Prep
3rd Alex T	Ogbourne St George

6yrs

1st Eleri D-C	Beechwood Park
2nd Lauren M D	St Bernard's Prep
3rd Aarush V	St Bernard's Prep

11yrs

1st Jenna B	Beech Grove
2nd Caroline F	Beech Grove
3rd Dea R	St Bernard's Prep

7yrs

1st Ben M	Trevor Roberts School
2nd Amreece A	St Bernard's Prep
3rd Isabelle W	Parkgate House

12yrs

1st Aurelia C	King's College Prep
2nd Flora P	King's College Prep
3rd Lois C	King's College Prep

8yrs

1st Amyrah C	St Bernard's Prep
2nd Myra G	St Bernard's Prep
3rd Taashvi K	St Bernard's Prep

13yrs

1st Scott B	Beech Grove
2nd Keira F	Beech Grove
3rd Darren R	Beech Grove

9yrs

1st Layla A	St Bernard's Prep
2nd Harmarni G	St Bernard's Prep
3rd Ameya J	St Bernard's Prep

Staff

1st Beech Grove School

Aysgarth's unique identity and traditions. Its parents will still be free to choose a different secondary academic pathway for their children, and our own recruitment process will continue to be rigorous.

What does this merger mean in practice? It means that we shall be discussing best practices in teaching and learning, exploring opportunities for Aysgarth pupils to access Rugby's resources, either through Aysgarth students visiting our School to enjoy our facilities or our staff spending time at Aysgarth. We look forward to sharing our sports facilities and coaching experts, for example holding pre-season sessions with Dylan Hartley, our new high-performance rugby coach.

We believe that 13 is the right age for prep school students to move to secondary school. They are ready to paint on a bigger canvas at that age, having flourished at the ages of

11 and 12 at the top of their prep schools and enjoyed their childhood for longer. In my view, the 11+ is driven by economics, not the interests of the child.

Bilton Grange already enjoys, and Aysgarth will do so soon, the stability and confidence of being part of a Group, of benefiting from centralised support in areas such as HR, Compliance, Marketing, Admissions and Safeguarding, and having the chance of bringing forward their own investment plans for buildings and dedicated facilities such as sport, performing arts and music.

Just as we do with our international partners, we will be sharing our ideas in the form of annual colloquia, offering staff promotion opportunities, and sharing our global network of former students, parents and staff who contribute generously to our mentoring and internship programmes. Our partner schools

each have their own communities and cultures. Together they have an impact not only on our shared success but also on the support for and interest in all our students.

The partnership between Rugby and Aysgarth is a true meeting of minds.



Safeguarding Culture

JASON HYATT

Supporting a Pupil who is admitted to hospital

CATH KITCHEN

From Classrooms to Cairngorms

CHRISTOPHER MORGAN

Living with Axial SpA an Invisible Illness

CHARLES ROBARDS

Harmony for Health

DR TREVOR LEE

Peace in our Time

IAN MORRIS

Safeguarding Culture – What is does a robust safeguarding culture look like?



Jason Hyatt, is an experienced independent school leader with over twenty years of experience at both Prep School and Senior School level including being a former SATIPS chairman.

When considering 'culture' within organisations in the broader context, we often think about concepts that encompass social behaviour, norms, knowledge, attitudes, and habits of individuals within a group or organisation. This same approach can be applied to the safeguarding culture of a school: the behaviour, norms, knowledge, attitudes, and habits of staff and visitors concerning the safeguarding of pupils. These daily actions and behaviours are crucial to promote safeguarding within the school. For instance, do staff wear their

lanyards? Do they report that tiny niggling doubt? Do they notice and report potentially hazardous objects in the playground? Do they carry out the weekly safeguarding quiz, or do they neglect it? Do they question unsupervised visitors? Do they take the time to read risk assessments for upcoming trips?

Safeguarding culture is a topic I discuss with prospective teachers during interviews at the schools where I have worked. I ask them to describe what they think a robust safeguarding culture might look like if they were to work at the school, and what their first impressions are of the school they are applying to. This serves two purposes: firstly, it provides a clear understanding of their safeguarding awareness, and secondly, it offers an external view of the school's existing safeguarding culture.

My interest in developing an understanding of leadership and safeguarding culture originated from a negative experience early in my teaching career. After completing my initial induction training on reporting concerns and promoting safeguarding within the school, I became part of a group of staff who felt uneasy about the actions of a particular colleague. When we reported our concerns, we were dismissed as 'troublemakers,' leading to the perception that senior

leaders were more concerned with protecting the school's reputation than taking concerns seriously and prioritising pupil safeguarding. This experience motivated me to become actively involved in promoting safeguarding in the schools I worked at. I soon moved to another school and took on the role of designated safeguarding lead, focusing on creating a robust safeguarding culture and ensuring that all concerns raised by staff were taken seriously.

As part of my journey to promote safeguarding within schools, I also took on the role of a school inspector, where I have been leading various inspections for over ten years. In addition to the clear importance of conducting thorough and robust inspections, this role has provided me with the opportunity to meet with safeguarding leads across diverse settings and observe the essential work they carry out. A key aspect of this role has been evaluating the safeguarding culture and the effectiveness of procedures within each setting.

Safeguarding Culture

Reflecting on my initial point about asking potential new staff what makes a robust safeguarding culture, I am reminded of the connections to McKinsey's 7-S framework (Channon et al., 2020). While this framework was developed in the late 1970s, it has stood the test of time in understanding the complexities of organisations such as schools and what they need to do to align their ideas for effectiveness. The 7-S framework considers:

- **Shared Values**
- **Strategy**
- **Systems**
- **Structure**
- **Staff**
- **Skills**
- **Style**

Shared Values: This aspect sits at the heart of what schools stand for with their approach to safeguarding – their shared values. What is important for your school to promote in terms of pastoral care and safeguarding?

In a large organisation, aligning these values can be challenging. For example, among your staff, you may have varying opinions on topics such as the consumption of alcohol for individuals under the age of 18. Some staff may feel that a small amount for older children at home with parents is acceptable, while others may find it completely unacceptable. Taking the time to identify and promote the core values of the school linked to safeguarding is crucial. This process must involve all stakeholders to ensure 'buy-in' from everyone involved. Once the shared values are established, the recruitment of staff becomes paramount to ensure that these values align with potential new hires.

Strategy: The development of a safeguarding strategy should be given high priority. This should begin at proprietor level with the oversight from governors creating a long-term strategy for the school. This is developed in conjunction with senior leaders, who will be responsible for embedding this within the school. Most schools, now, will have a governor responsible for safeguarding who will have a level of experience or expertise in safeguarding with the ability to challenge senior leaders whilst also being a critical friend to liaise with higher level thinking around safeguarding strategy. For example, some governing bodies, in conjunction with senior leaders, have prioritised the implementation and addition of a full-time mental health lead/s to work alongside the designated safeguarding lead to support the wellbeing of pupils. More and more governing bodies are finding creative ways to ensure they have a clear understanding of how safeguarding works within the school and the effectiveness of the procedures. Does your school carry

out regular audits of safeguarding procedures? These should create a detailed action plan that feed into the ongoing development of strategy. The strategy can be informed by the regular communication between governors and safeguarding leads through things like reports, safeguarding meetings, and discussions with staff and pupils.

Systems: The systems linked to safeguarding will involve seeing the daily safeguarding procedures in action by all staff. These are supported by the need for an effective safeguarding policy which underpins the procedures. Question: is your policy an amalgamation of many policies from the past three to five years (or more), or is it a unique policy that is current for 'now' in line with the latest guidance from documents like "Keeping Children Safe in Education?" Whilst comprehensive long safeguarding policies contain a wealth of information, my question to some senior leaders would be whether they think that all staff can understand, and effectively use, a policy which may be more than 100 pages? Another key part to the systems part of a safeguarding culture is whether there are clear and robust procedures in place to actively promote the wellbeing and safeguarding of the pupils in the school's care. Schools should have a clear staff code of conduct (or equivalent) that helps to underpin the robust safeguarding culture, helping to create those 'norms.' Do staff have guidance on how to work safely 1:1 or what they should do when taking a single pupil in a vehicle? Do they know what to do if they have a nagging doubt about an adult working with children? If they can't find the DSL, do they know how to make a referral?

Structure: This links to how the school is set up to support pastoral care and promote the wellbeing and safeguarding of pupils. It is great to see the transformation of pastoral

structures in schools over the past ten years. Many schools now give a suitable amount time and resources to the promotion of safeguarding with well-defined safeguarding teams who have comprehensive job descriptions to carry out their roles effectively. As mentioned previously, governors are showing the importance of the promotion of pupil wellbeing through things like mental health teams who work hand in hand with the safeguarding leads. Do staff and parents know how the pastoral and safeguarding teams are configured, and the mechanisms for sharing concerns?

Staff: Effective recruitment in any school or organisation is crucial to the successful promotion of any culture. A key part of fostering a safeguarding culture with staff begins with the recruitment process, ensuring that new members align with the shared values of the organisation. Having a robust interview process where safeguarding is given paramount importance will help to develop the safeguarding culture further. Additionally, succession planning for safeguarding leaders is vital. Schools with a larger number of staff trained to a higher level can foster healthy discussions and the sharing of ideas. More staff actively promoting safeguarding within the organisation strengthens this culture. As emphasised in "Keeping Children Safe in Education," safeguarding is 'everyone's responsibility.' A well-trained and informed staff body will be more effective in creating an environment where pupils feel safe and supported. Ultimately, effective recruitment and comprehensive training underpin a robust safeguarding culture in any educational institution.

Skills: Equipping staff with the right skills to promote safeguarding is crucial. Yet, there are still schools where training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) around this area are seen as chores or mere tick-box exercises. To foster a robust safeguarding

culture, it is imperative to give staff the necessary skillsets. Schools are now embracing more creative methods to upskill their teams. The days of monotonous PowerPoint presentations are over, where the stereotypical games coach sits distracted, planning fixtures for the term.

Instead, innovative approaches such as quizzes, role-play scenarios, and weekly 'what ifs' in staff meetings are gaining popularity, alongside the termly and annual update training. While regular whole staff training remains a positive feature in many schools, it's encouraging to see those who have conducted staff skillset matrices to identify areas for development. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) cannot be the sole pillar of support for pupils in need.

As part of the skillset audit, senior leaders can pinpoint staff members who could undertake additional training to bolster the safeguarding team. For instance, you may identify a gap in support for pupils with eating disorders. Rather than assigning this exclusively to the DSL, it could become a focal point for another pastoral staff member, who can then support the DSL. This approach not only reinforces the safeguarding team's capacity but also enhances succession planning, ensuring a broader coverage of staff with advanced expertise in specific areas of safeguarding and pastoral care.

Style: the final part McKinsey's 7S model considers the style of leadership of senior leaders and safeguarding leads. To promote a positive and robust safeguarding culture, this comes from the leaders within the organisation. If they openly

promote and prioritise safeguarding, and lead by example, this will cascade down. A key component of any positive safeguarding culture is being a 'listening school' where from the top down, people actively take time to listen to those around them. Do you work in a school where **all** pupils would feel safe to ask questions, raise concerns, and share thoughts with the adults working with them? This does not have to be questions around safeguarding, but if they can ask questions comfortably around other aspects of their lives, then hopefully this would give them the safety and confidence to raise a more serious concern should they need to. There are some schools who feel that having a school council is enough to say that there is 'pupil voice.' For me, pupil voice means that there are numerous avenues for all pupils to share, raise, and question thoughts, ideas and concerns that they may have. Whether this is linked to the running of the school, or simply sharing that they feel unhappy about something, pupil voice is equipping pupils with the ability and confidence to talk to a trusted adult within the school.

In conclusion, I would urge schools to self-evaluate their own school safeguarding culture. This is not simply getting senior leaders to look at things and feel they are robust. For me, this should involve the views of pupils, parents, staff, and external professionals who can evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures and overall culture. Whilst on the surface, a policy might look effective, the senior safeguarding leads may feel that procedures are positive, many pupils may feel safe, but what is the 'lived experience' **really** like for all pupils in that setting?

References:

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Supporting a Pupil who is admitted to hospital: How can you support their continuity of education?



Cath Kitchen OBE, Chair, National Association for Hospital Education.

I am sure in your time in school you will have experience of one of your pupils being admitted to hospital. As a school, you will have rallied round, sent messages of support to the parents and the pupil, reassured the wider school community, but how can you ensure that you hold that pupil in mind, and support their continuity of education, minimising the impact of that hospital stay?

Hospital education

Many of the larger regional hospitals e.g. Great Ormond Street Hospital School, Manchester Children's Hospital will have hospital teaching teams. These teams are employed

by the local authority to provide education for children under Section 19 of the Children's Act who are 'too unwell' to attend school. The LAs responsibilities are laid out in the statutory guidance 'Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs' (December 2023). These teams of qualified staff, who are Ofsted registered and inspected, will support your pupil's learning whilst they are an inpatient, maintaining that continuity of education and minimising the disruption.

Types of educational support

The education provided may look very different to what you imagine, but each child has a bespoke programme which is tailored to their individual medical need and academic levels. All programmes have to be planned to take account of treatment schedules, the impact of the treatment programmes, fatigue, pain, and low mood: it is possible that some children may struggle with aspects of concentration, memory, or physical ability.

Teaching may take place at the bedside, one to one, in spaces on the ward, like a playroom, or in a hospital school classroom. Teachers are usually subject specialists and although the focus is usually on core subjects, we offer opportunities to engage in a broader more enriching curriculum offer, which may include music and art related activities. Our flexible approach including shorter tasks, rest breaks, or digital learning tools helps sustain engagement and support continuity of education.

So how can you support your pupil?

Get in touch with the hospital school teaching team and start to build the relationship between you. The pupil will be dual registered with the hospital school whilst they are an inpatient. The hospital school will ask you to provide work and resources for the topics you would be covering in school so the pupil knows that they will not be behind when they get back to school, and if they are in contact with peers, then they can talk about the same things. The hospital teaching team will set up a

regular pattern of communication and it is much more effective if that is between educators than using the family as a means of liaison: they have enough to deal with at this challenging time. If it is permissible by the family and the health staff, then you can arrange virtual meetings and check-ins, arrange visits, messages or cards from her peers which will help the child to remain connected to school. It is also important to keep in contact with parents: ask them how they would prefer to be contacted and with what frequency.

Preparing the child's classmates

Think about how you can prepare the child's peers before they return to school. Be sensitive to what the child would like them to know. Where appropriate, use age-appropriate discussions e.g. to explain the impact of the illness/treatment and why the child might look different. It is important that the class knows how to make them feel welcome back.

Preparing to welcome the child back to school

When the child is ready to be discharged and to return to home, then the hospital school and medical staff will support you in planning the return to school in collaboration with the parents. Depending on the advice, a part time timetable may be appropriate, in a mixture of home and school learning, which can ease the transition back into the school environment. Arrangements may need to be flexible, as the impact of any treatment can be long term. An Individual Healthcare Plan (DfE statutory guidance 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' (DfE, December 2015)) may need to be considered. It is also important to think about the emotional impact that a hospital stay, being away from family and friends, and being away from school can have on the child. If there is no external support, then consider if you are able to offer some appropriate emotional support.

The importance of your role

Education plays a key role when a child is admitted to hospital but a well coordinated education approach can help maintain that sense of normalcy, a connection to their home life, their school and peers. Your role, as the child's home school, is to support this continuity of education, and to welcome them back into school when they are well enough to return. Although the hospital education team does not offer therapy or treatment, education is a key partner in the recovery programme, and where you can play an essential role.





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From Classrooms to Cairngorms: Limitless Learning and Life Skills



Christopher Morgan is Deputy Head of Curriculum at Gordonstoun Prep School in Elgin, Scotland. Before that he spent time in Dubai and Tokyo growing and setting up UK prep schools abroad. He is an art enthusiast, collector, and an enormous rugby fan, supporting his native Wales (much to his continued distress).

As the leaves begin to turn, and the evenings start drawing back in up here in the north of Scotland, the start of a new academic year at Gordonstoun Prep brings with it a sense of purpose, renewal, and a little excitement for what's to come.

Last year, we welcomed a new maternity cover teacher to the Prep School team. Mr G arrived on campus with an energy and warmth that immediately made an impression. He threw himself into school life with enthusiasm, and I simply did not see him without a smile on his face all year — despite the early starts, weekends, and busy schedule.

In January, he joined our Prep School skiers on their first sessions

on the ski slopes of the Cairngorms. He has assisted in the rifle range during a taster session for our Year 7s, and was on the sidelines supporting fixtures. Later in the year he accompanied Year 8 pupils as they began work on their Youth Philanthropy Initiative, partnering with local charities and learning what it means to lead with compassion. He was even put through his powerboat qualifications so that he could support Prep School pupils whilst out on topers in the harbour. The icing on the cake for Mr G last year was accompanying our Year 8's on their three-day maiden sail training voyage, aboard the 80-foot school yacht "Ocean Spirit".

Today, as I write this we are starting another academic year and Mr G has been taken on permanently. He has become a familiar face to pupils, and a trusted member of faculty. It's only Week 2, and it won't be long before Mr G, like the rest of us, is caught up in the whirlwind of opportunity here:

learning to sail at Hopeman Harbour, canoeing the Great Glen Way, maybe even taking part in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu sessions or helping backstage in the school's rock concert. Whether or not he personally gets to ski, sail, or scale a gorge, the pupils certainly will. These early weeks of term always remind me how unique the Gordonstoun experience is. The opportunities we offer aren't extras or nice-to-haves, they're integral to our ethos of *Plus Est En Vous*, or *There Is More In You*. We expect every child to go on expedition. We expect every child to take part in service and leadership. It's not optional, it's embedded, and it's reported on, just as academic progress is.

But that does raise an important question, one we constantly ask ourselves as educators here: How do you ensure academic rigour and progress while enabling this vast breadth of experience?



It's the wrong question, really. "Balance" implies sacrifice. It suggests that in order to build character, we must compromise on academics. That's not the case. The real question is: how do we enhance academic learning through all of this?

How do we make sure that while our pupils are climbing mountains and camping at Cape Wrath, they are also exceeding expectations in the classroom?

The answer starts with structure and clarity. In the Prep School, our school day runs from 8.15am to 5.30pm, and within that time we make every minute count. Lessons are purposeful, targeted, and data-informed. There's no room for filler or drift. Each session has clear objectives, and every teacher is acutely aware of where each pupil sits in relation to Age-Related Expectations — both in national terms and individual potential.

We use standardised assessments intelligently — not to test for testing's sake, but to get the clearest possible picture of each learner's cognitive strengths and areas for support. Cognitive Ability Tests in particular allow us to understand

how a child thinks, not just what they know. This informs our teaching and our interventions, which are reviewed and refined through termly tracking meetings.

Progress isn't left to chance. We compare data year-on-year, identify trends, and — crucially — intervene early when a pupil veers off their path. But we're not data-driven to the point of losing the human connection. Relationships are at the heart of what we do, and strong teaching begins with knowing the child.

Of course, being located where we are, flexibility is key. Our weather remains unpredictable, and as we look towards winter, we're already planning how to take advantage of the first good snowfall for ski trips. Three years ago, we had an unexpected dump of snow — and promptly and swiftly rearranged the timetable to get pupils up to the hills. These moments, when seized, become memories that last.

The truth is, there's never a "quiet" term at Gordonstoun Prep. Even in these opening weeks, our calendar is packed: parent information evenings, expeditions planning, rehearsals for

winter concerts, House competitions, and the first academic assessments. Teachers are setting baselines, meeting parents, and mapping out individual learning journeys that stretch all the way to summer.

And yet, it's this very momentum that energises the community. By the time the end of term rolls around in December, pupils will have already made enormous strides — both in their books and in themselves. They'll head into the break a little taller, a little braver, and ready to take on the next challenge.

As for Mr G, our newly permanent member of staff, I suspect that he'll look back and wonder how it all fits into one year. He'll also, I'm sure, feel the same as the rest of us do each term: that we've grown, learned, and become better educators and better people along the way.

Welcome to a new year at Gordonstoun Prep. Let's get to it.

Living with Axial SpA – an Invisible Illness



Charles Robards

I have always loved sport and was lucky enough to have played most of them growing up. As a youngster, I was extremely driven and competitive — I simply had to win. All I wanted was to become a professional sportsman, especially in cricket.

Under the tropical sun of Durban, South Africa — the country of my birth — I relished the competitive sporting culture, playing cricket and provincial squash and football. When I arrived in the UK at the age of 11, thanks to the enormous sacrifices made by my parents, I was lucky enough to secure a place at the local prep school, Bilton Grange. I look back on that time as some of the happiest years of my life; what a wonderful place it was to spend my first formative years.

It was at Bilton Grange that my passion for sport truly developed, nurtured by the watchful eyes of so many talented and committed coaches. Basketball, shooting, athletics, tennis, squash, swimming, table tennis, cricket, rugby, and hockey. If a competitive croquet team had existed, I would have been in it!

Upon leaving Bilton, I went on to attend Rugby School, where the sporting opportunities continued to flourish. I quickly fell in love with the game of rackets and was fortunate enough to win five National Championships at the famous Queen's Club, including the prestigious doubles title in 1994 with my playing partner, Richard Carter.

I secured a place in the 1st XI Cricket side four years early and would Captain the side in my last two seasons. I was lucky enough to play hockey and cricket for Warwickshire, joined the 1st XI Hockey side, and was honoured to play for the 1st XV rugby team for two years, culminating in a tour of a lifetime to Australia. The breadth of experiences I was fortunate to enjoy at Rugby School

were priceless, and I will always look back on my time there with immense fondness and gratitude for having attended such a magnificent institution.

After Rugby, I headed off to the University of Kent, ready to fulfil my dreams. I would captain the University in my final year and go on to represent England Universities in 1997.

However, life rarely goes to plan. Shortly after leaving Rugby School and at the age of 19, I was diagnosed with a serious, and at times debilitating, arthritic condition — then known as ankylosing spondylitis, now more commonly referred to as axial SpA.

For those who are unfamiliar with the condition, axial SpA, is more than just arthritis. It is a complex chronic inflammatory disease, predominantly of the spine but can impact the other joints, such as the shoulders, hips, and knees. Inflammation where muscles attach to the bones causes extreme pain. Despite being relatively unheard of, it is, however, as common as MS and Parkinson's combined. There are in fact 1 in 200

people, approximately 220,000 in the UK, who are afflicted with the disease. Axial SpA is a systemic disease, meaning it can affect the entire body in some people, ultimately creating further complications such as severe fatigue, eye pain, and even heart and lung problems. The pain experienced by those with axial SpA does have psychological consequences, commonly causing feelings of helplessness, fear, anxiety, and sadness. The cause of the disease is still unknown; however, genes do seem to play an important role. Most people with AS are positive for the HLA-B27 gene, but not everyone who has this gene has AS. The disease often materialises between the ages of 20 and 40 but has been known to begin as early as 10 years old.

I've never been one to give up easily. Despite the diagnosis, I continued to pursue my dream, playing at the highest level I could. But my condition inevitably held me back — in fitness, in performance, and perhaps most importantly, in self-belief. A bubble had burst, and doubt crept in. Cricket became a battle between body and mind. I was no longer fully present, and the endless cycle of trying to stay fit while managing flare-ups and other symptoms became physically exhausting and mentally draining.

Still, I'm proud to have played a good standard of club and representative cricket well into my 50th year.

Living with axial SpA for most of my adult life, writing "Hitting AS for Six" gave me my first real opportunity to reflect on how it has shaped me — not just physically, but emotionally, in my relationships, and in my mental health.

I wanted to endeavour to portray the amazing world of amateur sport, and in particular cricket, whilst touching on very important issues such as living and playing with arthritis, friendships, coaching, mental health, and the impact that sport can have on your overall wellbeing and wider aspects of life. It is about opening up after many years of fighting with my

own inner demons and struggling to play through a debilitating arthritic condition. I didn't undertake this book claiming to have played professional sport or at the same time to be all knowledgeable in the field of arthritis and wellbeing, but simply in the hope that other sportsman and women, whatever their background and level of play, would be able to relate with and enjoy reading my story. It is a journey of hope, determination, resilience and, ultimately, self-discovery and touches especially on the importance of never giving up on your dreams.

Both cricket and AS have played a huge part in who I am today. Sport has always offered me structure, something to work and aspire to. It teaches you determination and resilience beyond measure and has been a constant companion throughout my life. There is no doubt the role it played in my recovery both physically and generally as a young adult.

By sharing my journey, I hope to highlight the challenges posed by this invisible, debilitating, and still relatively unknown disease — all set against the backdrop of my passion for cricket. Being a perfectionist and deeply competitive, my diagnosis challenged the very core of my identity. It has been an emotional and physical rollercoaster, and there have been times when I felt like giving up. In truth, sometimes I did.

The unpredictable nature of associated pain created a constant background of instability, quietly chipping away at my resilience. Yet the focus and discipline that sport taught me always pulled me back — stronger and more determined each time.

I self-inject an immunosuppressor fortnightly and take daily anti-inflammatories. I also try to swim every day and can often be found in the sauna, steam room, or under a cold shower! With the right support structure around you — including access to specialist AS clinics, a good rheumatology consultant, the right

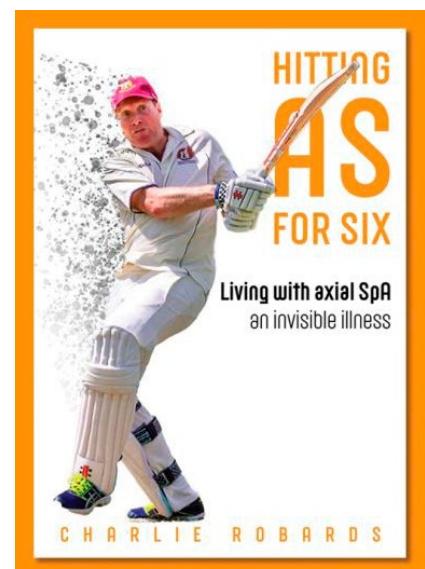
medication, and support from NASS — anything is possible.

I have learnt the hard way to speak openly to my loved ones about how I am feeling, and to never be ashamed to tell people I have the condition.

Sport plays such a critical role in society, and I hope my story resonates with others who may be facing their own battles. Living with axial SpA is not easy, but it can still be a full, rich life. I am proud of who I have become and what I have achieved despite my condition. I hope my story encourages others to never give up — and to always follow their dreams.

You can find out more about *Hitting AS for Six* and purchase a copy at www.charlieroards.com.

Axial SpA does not receive any government funding so any help and support will go a long way to understanding and treating this disease for future generations to come. It has not been easy reliving my experiences of living with my disease, but I hope that it will raise awareness and ultimately benefit others. All profits from the sale of my book will be donated to the National Axial Spondyloarthritis Society (NASS).





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Harmony for Health: the recipe for well-being and happiness in all our schools



Dr Trevor Lee, Educational Consultant, is former Principal at Merchant Taylors' Prep in north-west London, (IAPS) a school that is recognised as outstanding in all aspects by the Schools' Inspectorate.

In 2018, Trevor successfully wrote and presented two proposals to the Department for Education for the creation of two new academies in north London. The Saracens High School (2024) has now over 1300 students. He has taught internationally on strategy, leadership, collaborative learning and well being – see “Schools: the happiest days of our lives?” Amazon.

Trevor currently is an elected committee member of the Conservative Commonwealth and Foreign Council and is a presenter, researcher and speech writer in the House of Lords.

Picture this: a classroom filled with the joyful sounds of children singing freely and uninhibitedly, tapping rhythms on desks as “make do” cahons and perhaps pulling a spontaneous dance move or two! It's not just a scene from a feel-good movie; it's a snapshot of an effective primary school environment where music plays a starring role.

But why should we care about incorporating music into the primary school curriculum? Isn't it just a “nice-to-have” rather than a “must-have”?

This is a question that I and some senior politicians are trying to argue in the House of Lords at the moment as the Government looks to review the Curriculum.

Let's dive into the harmonious world of music education and discover why it's as essential as learning the ABCs.

Cognitive Crescendo: Boosting Brainpower

First off, let's talk about the brain—our very own command centre. Engaging with music isn't just about hitting the

right notes; it's a full-brain workout. Research indicates that learning music enhances brain functions related to language, memory, and mathematics. Children who participate in music lessons often demonstrate stronger problem-solving skills, better pattern recognition, and enhanced memory retention, which are all vital for young cognitive development.

Think of it this way: when a child learns a new song, they're not just memorising lyrics. They're decoding



patterns, understanding structures, and strengthening their memory muscles. Forget the fast food fix. It's like sneaking vegetables into their favourite meal—nourishing their brains without them even realising it.

Emotional Ensemble: Tuning into Feelings

Now, let's shift from the head to the heart. Music provides children with a unique avenue to express and understand their emotions. Whether it's the triumph of mastering a challenging piece or the comfort of a familiar lullaby, music helps children traverse their emotional landscapes.

Moreover, group music activities, such as choirs or ensembles, require children to work together, listen, and respond to others. This teamwork enhances communication skills, empathy, and respect for others' contributions. The UK's National Plan for Music Education emphasises that music should be inclusive, enabling every child to thrive, regardless of

background. In essence, music acts as an emotional toolkit, helping children manage their feelings and connect with others—a skill set that will serve them well beyond the classroom.

Cultural Chorus: Celebrating Diversity

Our world comprises a rich tapestry of cultures and music is one of the most vibrant threads. Introducing children to various musical traditions, genres and cultures allows them to develop a more inclusive worldview. Whether learning about classical compositions from the romantic, baroque or early music eras, folk tunes, classic rock or world music, children gain cultural awareness and a deeper understanding of the global community they live in.

This cultural education promotes tolerance and respect, preparing students to engage meaningfully with the world around them. Music, in this sense, becomes a powerful tool for cultural integration and empathy.

Life Skills' Symphony: Beyond the Music Room

The benefits of music education do not stop at cognitive and emotional development. Learning an instrument or taking part in musical activities instills discipline, patience, and perseverance. Children learn the value of practice, the joy of improvement, the fulfilment of mastery and the satisfaction of achieving their goals. Additionally, performing music in front of others—whether in a classroom setting, a school assembly, or a concert—helps children build confidence in their abilities. For many primary-aged students, stepping into the spotlight for the first time can be a powerful experience, one that boosts their self-esteem, self-belief, creativity as well as encouraging them to take risks in other areas of life.

These are life skills that transcend the music room, equipping children to face challenges and seize opportunities in all areas of life.



Harmony for Health: Discussing singing in schools at an All Party Group at Westminster



Pictured above Dr Lee addressing chancellors and delegates from European Universities, House of Lords

Academic Arpeggios: Harmonising with Other Subjects

But wait, there's more! Music education has been linked to improved performance in other academic areas. Studies have shown that children involved in music education consistently outperform their peers in standardised tests. Music students often score higher in areas such as reading, vocabulary, and mathematics. These benefits are most evident when music is introduced at an early age, providing a head-start that contributes to academic success throughout primary and secondary school.

It's as if music is the secret sauce that makes the whole educational meal more delicious and nutritious.

A Call to Action: Let's Strike a Chord

Despite the myriad benefits, music education often finds itself on the chopping block due to budget constraints or a focus on 'core' subjects. However, as we have explored, music is far from a frivolous addition to the curriculum. It's a vital part that enriches students' lives and enhances their overall education. Our music therapy research demonstrates though big data across the globe that music can be preventative to the epidemic of child anxiety and depression as well as having positive impacts with those suffering from dementia.

Investing in music education is an investment in a future generation of thinkers, creators, and empathetic individuals. Music helps shape children into adaptable, inclusive, and thoughtful adults who will carry these values into the wider world.

So, let's turn up the volume on music education and ensure that every child can experience the transformative power of music. After all, a school without music is like a guitar without strings—full of potential but missing its true voice.

As this oratorio comes to an end, I can say with the confidence of both being blessed in my state school primary education (in the particularly impoverished borough of Newham) as a pupil, with the benefit of a classical training in violin and then a lifetime as an educator, that integrating music into the primary school curriculum is not just beneficial—it's essential. From boosting cognitive abilities and emotional intelligence to fostering cultural awareness and life skills, music education lays down a melody that resonates throughout a child's life. So, let the beat go on and then watch our children flourish in health and harmony.

Peace in our Time



*Ian Morris, Chaplain
at Bishop Stortford College.*

May 8th 1945 was VE day – a time of great celebration when hostilities between Germany and the allies finally came to an end. Lives had been lost, hopes had been shattered and everyone had lost something. But the peace we crave is more than the absence of war.

Two decades later came the flower power generation who told us to make love not war. The hedonistic pleasure of the summer of love might have masked feelings of fragility for a few blissful moments, but such things can't give a lasting peace. Authentic peace is when we are able to be calm in the midst of the noise and strife of exams and difficult situations.

Peace is a big deal. God wants us to be at peace – not only with each other but within ourselves. Whether one has a faith in God or not, modern science and ancient scriptures both tell us that we flourish best when we are at peace. When we're stressed and fearful our brain releases the fight or flight hormones; causing the heart rate to increase, the breathing to become

shallow and our brain shuts down all but the amygdala to help us survive. We literally can't think straight when we're not at peace. Yet we were made to be at peace.

The words for peace appear in the bible 249 times. The Hebrew word, **Shalom**, means completeness. The origins of the word are in the description of a builder's stone that is perfect, no cracks or rough edges. It was also used to apply to a wall where all the stones fit perfectly together with no gaps between. It's the idea that the wall made up of many parts is one whole, harmonious unit. Each of us is like that wall, made up many parts; a complexity of mind, body and soul and we are at our best when we are '*Shalom*'. When all the constituent parts are fitted together harmoniously.

In one of his letters to a church, Paul tells them to, "*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts*" The Greek word used for "let rule" means to let peace rule like an umpire in your life. The metaphor is taken from the judge in the Olympic Games, who was the umpire who determined who's the victory was, and to whom the crown belonged. Paul tells us that we are commanded to let this peace rule and have authority in our hearts because no matter what is ahead of us, if the

umpire says we're safe, we're safe. No one can contest it.

By telling us to allow the peace of Christ to be the umpire in our hearts Paul is pointing us to the source of inner tranquillity. When we face scary situations, it is natural for us to be fearful. It's how our bodies were designed to react. But we also have a choice to step out in faith and overcome that fear. We can choose to not let the sounds of our fears get to us but instead we can tune in and listen to peace of God, allowing that "*peace act as the umpire*" and have the final say in our hearts. We can allow "*the peace of God*" and the love of others to "*guard our hearts and minds*" against fear and doubt. I know it's not easy when we chunter to ourselves and do ourselves down, but there's one who knows us better than we know ourselves, and I'm learning to trust what He says more than what I say to myself. Julian of Norwich said, "*All will be well and all will be well*" and trusting in that puts us on a firm footing to face all that may come our way. So, to all those facing exams and other stressful, sticky situations, may you know the peace of God that transcends all understanding.

Ian



The SATIPSKI Report 2025

For the fourth year in a row, The NSSA ran the SATIPSKI indoor ski champs. With a growing number of competitors at over 120 this year, it was a busy morning at Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead and was a great success.

With racers all taking part in two runs of slalom, pupils of all abilities took part with those racing for the first time and many skiers who race regularly. The atmosphere at the centre was fantastic, with a real buzz over the racing with some of the children having arrived the evening before to take advantage of the training session, we saw several schools new to the event, alongside the regulars.

With winning teams from many of the schools across the age groups and some great individual results, we hope that this event will continue to build, with more pupils taking part, year on year.

10 SATIPS schools took part, an increase of 2 over the 2024 event, bringing between 4, and 20 pupils along to the event.

We're already looking forward to next years event, which will be on the 11th of May, with entry open from Sep/Oct this year.

We hope that this event whet's the appetite of many schools and racers to take part in the many schools events held in the UK and, through the winter, in the alps

The results from this years event can be found on the link below.
schoolssnowsports.co.uk/schools-ski-events-information-results

Information on other Uk events can be found on the link below
www.tickettailor.com/events/nssa?sort=start

SATIPSKI 2026

Event Date: 11th May

Booking will be on our entry
webpage later in the autumn.

www.tickettailor.com/events/nssa



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Do Not Disconnect



Francesca Goodwin, Head of PSHEE at Bilton Grange Prep School is a Relationships and Sex Education Specialist.

The ever-evolving social and emotional needs of children growing up in a media-driven age and how schools can play a part through effective RSHE.

A Life Spent Online

One could argue that we are accelerating towards an online society. Ofcom's annual Online Nation report, diving into consumer digital habits showed that adults are spending an average of 4 hours and 20 minutes each day online across smartphones, tablets, and computers in the U.K. Compared to 2023, when adults over 18 spent an average of 3 hours and 41 minutes online, this is a big jump, emphasised by the fact that the difference from 2022 was just 8 minutes.

The average is being driven in a large part by usage among younger adults. 18- to 24-year-olds are spending 6 hours and 1 minute online, an increase of 1.5 hours over 2023, when they were online for 4 hours 36 minutes.

If we expand the parameters to include the mid-teens demographic, data from August 2023 shows that, among 15- to 24-year-olds, on an average

day, Instagram (53%) and WhatsApp (52%) were used by just over half of this age group, making them slightly more popular than Facebook (49%), Snapchat (45%) and TikTok (38%). In terms of the actual time spent by users of each brand, the numbers change dramatically. 15- to 24-year-olds who used TikTok spent on average nearly 2 hours a day on the app: a much higher figure than other platforms.

The Loneliness Problem

Statistics are one thing, but what do they mean for the social and emotional health of our communities? For this we need to examine the parallel rise in what Vivek Murthy, Joe Biden's Surgeon General, referred to in an 81-page report, published in 2023, as America's 'Epidemic of Loneliness', claiming that its negative health effects were on par with those of tobacco use and obesity. And it's not just America. The UK now has a Minister for Loneliness, as does Japan. Indeed, a growing number of public health officials regard loneliness as the developed world's next major public-health issue.

What is more worrying, however, is the now popular trend on TikTok where young adults celebrate creative ways of not going out and cancelling plans. Where it might have been

deeply uncool in the past to stay in on a Saturday Night, the peer pressure that used to beckon teens off the sofa, now draws them online to a community of self-identifying introverts, who bond through sharing their social anxiety online.

Being able to be alone with oneself is, of course, a vital life skill, and isolation (objective) does not necessarily lead to loneliness (subjective); however, the solitude of teenagers and 20-somethings is far from quiet and contemplative. Instead of physical-world contact, the isolated generations of the pandemic years are flooding their supposed downtime with texts, videos, comment threads, memes, viral trends and live streams from friends, colleagues and... the rest of the world. It is not a case of opting out but rather plugging in.

If we take the Campaign to End Loneliness definition of loneliness as 'a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of the social relationships that we have, and those that we want', we can see that, though social media may increase the number and availability of interactions a person has, it is how



they feel about those relationships that determines whether they experience loneliness.

As the Atlantic writer Derek Thompson wrote in January this year, the effects of the crowded isolation of digital life make for bleak reading. Research is drawing firmer and firmer links between isolation and soaring mental health problems, especially among young people, with 62% of lonely young people reporting that ‘feeling lonely makes them lose confidence in themselves’. Socialisation during early life plays a fundamental role in children’s long-term cognitive, emotional and relational development, as well as overall health. During the Covid-19 pandemic, socialisation was limited for three years: a critical developmental time for infants, children and adolescents. If we then add to this the widespread adaptation, and even preference for, spending time alone, coupled with the growing distrust of institutions and governments perpetuated by social media “experts” advising on self-care and wellness in clickbait sensationalist videos, the perceived risks of social isolation become diminished, allowing actual disconnection to increase. What is branded as “me time” becomes a serious public-health concern.

In particular, Thompson reflects on how the “morning routine” genre of social media might promote a kind of monastic optimisation, where the attractive, wealthy, often male protagonist wakes up, meditates, journals, exercises, takes supplements and slips into an ice bath, all without the distraction of a single other person. It is a streamlined, productive, “healthy” existence, and all within an isolated bubble that has no need for appreciation of alternative narratives or opinions. There is no time to hear ‘the other side’; there is no space for understanding, for empathy, for inclusion. The ripple effects are thus not only felt by the individual but by the whole village.

In an article, published in October 2024, Julianne Holt-Lunstad cites the US Department of Health and Human Services findings that availability and diversity of social relationships, interactions and networks are critical for health and well-being, based on data documenting recent increases in social isolation and loneliness, and decreases in social connection globally. In addition, the factors that affect this trend were found to include growing political divides, economic disparities, and the introduction of digital technologies. In other words, the highly isolationist narrative of “morning routine” TikToks is reflected in the increasingly polarised nature of society as a whole.

While TikTok can be a place where people navigate and explore identity and relationships, it is also a highly contradictory space where the boundaries between what is real and what is part of a highly curated performance become blurred. When we then compare the messiness of what relationships are actually like to the edited online versions that often adhere to reductive, traditional norms, reality becomes more and more unappealing and the temptation for further social withdrawal greater.

What Part Can Schools and RSHE play?

Social media, whether we love it or loathe it, is very much here to stay and a part of our children’s lives. Even without access to a smart phone, the language, style and values of influencers and celebrities is embedded within the cultural references and everyday discourse of Gen Z and Gen Alpha. No child is growing up in an exclusively offline space.

Likewise, social media platforms can be great places to connect with friends, find creative inspiration and share interests and experiences. It is therefore vital that teaching of social media responsibility is embedded into the daily learning of young people, in

order to arm them with the knowledge that they need to navigate, not just digital platforms, but their entire cultural landscape and relationships in a happy and healthy fashion.

Banning technology, deleting the apps, or dictating the rules runs the risk of ostracising children and reinforcing the dangers of social media whilst ignoring the potential positives of responsible use. The scope for misuse when they do eventually have unlimited access to a device is high.

Effective RSHE classes, as part of a whole-school approach to digital learning and wellbeing, can provide a supportive environment to have open conversations about using social media, as well as normalising discussions around mental health. When children feel heard and understood, they are more likely to seek support when they are struggling. By taking an active interest in how and why they use technology, we can come alongside them and empower them to interrogate the influences around them and discern whether they are enhancing or harmful.

By connecting digital literacy to themes of emotional intelligence and self-awareness, we can provide young people with the tools they need to take ownership of their emotions and establish and maintain positive relationships with both themselves and their peers. Through fostering a non-judgmental culture of openness and curiosity, we can help children to cultivate the resilience needed to be present in their lives; to tolerate the messiness, and to not disconnect.

Ah, To Teach



Bob Brown Dr. Robert S. Brown, a retired Psychiatrist and Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve Medical Corps, dedicated the last decade of his career at Fort Lee treating Soldiers returning from combat with PTSD. As a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Professor of Education at UVA, he gained recognition for his Mental Health course, which emphasized the importance of exercise in maintaining mental well-being. Since retiring, he has written 8 books and writes a weekly column in the www.theroanokestar.com.

If I have standing to address esteemed teachers in England's prestigious independent schools, a big "if," it is not because I have a PhD in Education or an MD from the University of Virginia or was Professor of Education or Clinical Professor of Psychiatry or taught Mental Health for decades or practiced psychiatry and forensic psychiatry, all within view of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains.

Nor is my authority derived from impressive success as an author of eight books and as a weekly columnist of an online newspaper, **www. Theroanokestar.com**, by which I mean I wrote neither for fame nor fortune. The royalties for all my publications, seldom more than \$0.10 monthly, are undeniable proof of success in achieving my objectives.

Speaking soberly, my standing, a firm one, comes from repeatedly watching the movie, "Tom Brown's School Days." Headmaster Thomas Arnold captured my heart, making me want to be a better, more honest and fair-minded

person. My dear wife wonders why I keep watching "Tom Brown's School Days," unaware I'm attending Rugby and have been there since 1567.



Thomas Arnold by Thomas Phillips

Additional credentials include my treatment-resistant obsession with the movie, "Goodbye Mr. Chips." I have never watched it without tears from a heart nearly broken by combat casualties and a soul strengthened by the endurance and palpable love in and for Mr. Chips.

The primary purpose of my remarks to teachers is to acknowledge a truth you are undoubtedly aware of: you play a crucial role as sculptors of minds and shapers of destinies, even in the face of frequent challenges and frustrations. My mother (1898-1971) had six children, of which I am the youngest. She married my father when she was 14 and he was 21. She left school after

the fourth grade but **my mother taught well.**

On my way home from school as a child no older than 8 or 9, as an alternative to being beaten by an older bully, I promised him a gift made for me by my father, a model boat. Cunning and deceit came naturally and early in my life, highly suggestive of a life in politics or the law.

Fleet of foot, it was my intention to dash into my house, slamming the door behind me, safe from the bully who walked the 10 city blocks to my house, anticipating his ill-gotten award.

My flawless scheme succeeded until my mother asked little Bobby why I raced into the house. I was sly and scheming but I lacked the ability to lie well. Firmly but without palpable anger, my mother said, "Get your boat. Give it to the boy." Obediently, Bobby took his boat to the back porch, hoping the bully had gone his merry way but he stood with open arms, took my boat, and was never seen again.

When I hear Judy Collins sing "My Father (1968)," tears of sadness fill my eyes for my dad:

*"My father always promised us
That we would live in France
We'd go boating on the Seine
And I would learn to dance"*

Dad loved the water surrounding Norfolk, Virginia, spent his youth on a tugboat and always wanted to own a seaworthy boat. When the opportunity arrived, my mother would not permit it. My father lived to be 93. He was noted for his skillful hands.

My dad's mind satisfied John Locke's "tabula rasa." Having no formal education, his mind was dominated by native intelligence and integrity. **My dad also taught well.**

As a teenager, I was heavily involved in sports. Needing a study post to support a basketball rim (basket), I spied a pipe suitable for my plan. It had been lying under our house for years. It seemed stuck but I pulled it out readily.

The moment the pipe was ready for its new role, water gushed from under the house. Soon, standing in water, I remembered that Norfolk is only one foot above sea level. Panic completely possessed me as I ran into the house to tell my parents about my misfortune.

My mother said, "George, go fix the broken pipe." This is what my dad was good at.

My dad said, "The toolbox is in the woodshed. Get a Stillson wrench."

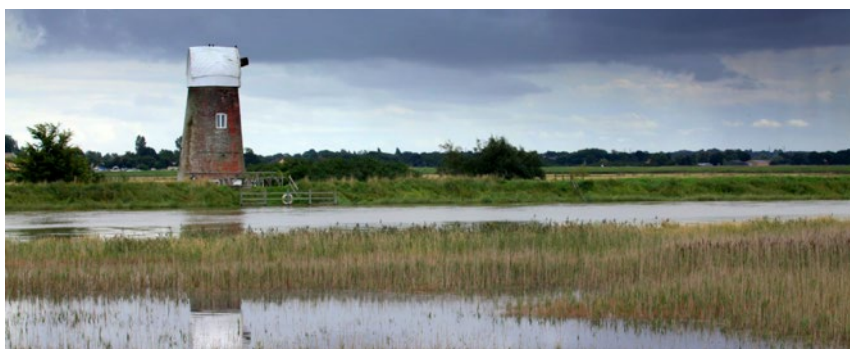
This is not the solution I expected! Now I was puzzled and panic stricken: my father had never defied my mother.

The darkness of silence fell over the scene.

Having never held a wrench intimately nor having never known a wrench by name, I went to the woodshed and picked up a tool.

The worst, yet to come, I crawled under the dark house where water was gushing, spiders were weaving webs I could feel but not see, and time was of the essence. I may have been crying.

By the powerful force of the water on my face, I found the fractured pipe.



When Stillson did its intended job, the water suddenly stopped, and I became the hero of my own life. Lessons learned: I can break things, even unintentionally, and I can fix things. I was on a new course. I crawled under the tutelage of a remarkable teacher.

I was a "jock" not a scholar in high school. **Kitty Garnett, a substitute teacher**, looked into my unawareness and challenged me, seeing talent and value unknown to me. She offered me a counselor job in a summer camp, arranged tutoring in chemistry at camp, encouraged a football coach to provide housing at UVA, and she partially filled my suitcase with her husband's clothes. Her nephew drove me to UVA.

I arrived at UVA without a letter of admission, but with a letter from my high school principal. The Dean of Admissions said, "Your grades do not warrant admission, but your principal's reputation is solid. We have been pleased with his recommendations in the past. I am admitting you and offering you a scholarship on the basis of his letter."

I confess I am not particularly bright. I place importance on caring for others and trying endlessly to keep in mind the words of the prophet Micah who said, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8.

Every summer during college, I worked at Camp Greenbriar, graduated with a BA in Biology, and entered medical school at UVA.

Mistakenly thinking getting into medical school was more challenging than staying in medical school, I failed out at the end of the first year. My academic failure was solely the result of not studying. The misery of failing was lasting anguish.

Founded in 1728, the Norfolk Academy was molded after the English public schools. Kitty Garnett and her husband landed me a teaching and coaching job at the Norfolk Academy. Looking back, it was one of the happiest periods of my life, but my soul was unrefreshed. I had to be a doctor and Soldier.

From teaching I moved to school administration as Principal of Blue Ridge School near UVA.

Professor Virgil S. Ward, a remarkable teacher and scholar, encouraged me through a master's degree and a PhD in Education, knowing I had been reapplying to medical schools for nearly 10 years. Years after his death, I learned that Professor Ward had gone to the Admissions Committee, UVA, and said, "I stake my reputation on Bob Brown." I was given a second chance, almost unheard of in medical school.

I graduated in the medical school class of 1967 instead of the class of 1957, the class I failed out of. As if by divine guidance opportunities were opened to me by teachers I will never forget. Thank God for teachers who are kind, competent, and caring; they never give up on lost causes.

www.meaningfulwordswork.com

The Road to Lagos



David Kelly was born and spent much of his childhood in the picturesque South of Ireland, where it is said, the tradition of storytelling is almost as ancient as the Island itself.

David remembers to this day the magical warmth in sitting around a big open fire on a winters evening, the wind howling down the chimney, listening to storytellers spinning captivating yarns.

After a lifetime of working in the commercial and charity sectors, when Covid strangled the world, with new found time on his hands, he decided with a little prompting, to have a shot at putting to paper that book they say hides within each of us.

'The Road to Lagos' is the fictional outcome! Turning the pages, you will be whisked away into a world of deceit, romance and action, not to mention the 'hand of fete'. David hopes that it gives each of you as much pleasure and enjoyment in the reading as it did him in the writing.

David enjoys the beautiful countryside around Northamptonshire, enjoys a game of golf, the odd pint of beer and an Indian meal.

Some years ago I was attending a Charity meeting in East London of which at the time I was a trustee, I was on my way to the rendezvous point when I passed an incident involving a car and a pedestrian beneath a railway bridge. The car was driven by a well-

heeled white woman, the pedestrian being black. So from that point I tucked the incident away in my memory banks. Eventually, I would go on to let imagination and creativity run riot !! so that was the foundation stone for the 'Road to Lagos'

Previously I had written a number of simple poems, which I often shared with my niece; so when the covid pandemic came along, she suggested that perhaps I should use my new found time to write a book !!! I was not an academic by any means, I made my living in the commercial world.

I suppose originating from Ireland, a nation strewn with literary superstars, perhaps there might be something in there somewhere!

There is an old well known saying something along the lines of there being a book in all of us?

However I was also very conscious of a witticism by the journalist: Christopher Hitchens

"Everyone has a book in them, but in most cases, that is where it should stay"

So I rose to the challenge !

The awful reality dawned of what I had let myself in for, just me and a blank computer screen and a headful of scrambled ideas. After writing some 20 or so pages, it was so bad, I was tempted to throw the towel in. However, I preserved and some 18 months later I had a manuscript in

my hands, which I thought was great only to be torn apart by prospective publishers, of whom I must have written to 30 or more (located through 'Writers, Artists Year Book'). Eventually I received some 6 offers (all part contributory) finally I chose what I thought was the right offer for myself.

A further 18 months after signing the publishing contract, despite promises there was no book. Eventually the awful reality hit me, I had been scammed!!

Subsequently I found a new publishing house with a local office, happy to say after many corrections my work 'The Road to Lagos' was finally published by New Generation Publishing on the 23rd December and is now available through most on line retailers and to order with the major high street retailer.

Did I enjoy the experience, yes I did, I learnt many lessons which will stand me in good stead when My next book is ready

So I say this to any budding author who thinks they have a book in them:

Follow your dream, watch out for scammers and keep away from 'AI'

There is nothing like the feeling of holding your finished first book in your own hands,

Good or bad, who really cares, you did it!!

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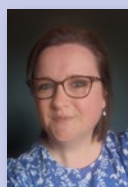
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