Updates, guidance and resources for your whole leadership team

TEACHING AND LEARNING
Tackling underachievement through mastery planning
Page 38

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE
Data: analysing the transition from KS2 to KS3 Page 8

SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
The pupil premium 2016-17: what you need to know Page 28

SEN AND SAFEGUARDING
Preparing pupils with SEND for assessment Page 52
Employment Law in Education 2016

www.oeconferences.com/Employment16

Expert speakers include:

Peter Woodhouse
Partner, Stone King

Dai Durbridge
Partner, Browne Jacobson LLP

Naseem Nabi
Partner, Veale Wasbrough Vizards

KEY BENEFITS

RESTUCTURES
Take away legal guidance on managing restructures

ABSENCE MANAGEMENT
Learn how to manage long- and short-term absence

CAPABILITY
Ensure your capability procedures are compliant and robust

£50 off*
the standard rate when you book using promotional code ISELU16

*Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer

#oeELU16
Contents

5  Welcome: Leading and learning
6  Conferences calendar

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE
7  Introduction
8  Transition from Year 6 to the end of KS3
10 Staff and data: using new systems and assessment models consistently
12 An Ofsted inspection checklist for deputy and assistant headteachers
14 Headteacher interviews: advice and example questions
16 Essentials of leadership: learning from business
18 Preventing extremism and radicalisation: governing body update
20 Chief Schools Adjudicator’s annual report
21 Admissions model policy

SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
23 Introduction
24 SBMs: let’s take a moment to celebrate
26 SBM March checklist
28 The pupil premium 2016-17: what you need to know
30 Ask the Expert: your burning questions answered
32 What’s in store for 2016? Expert predictions
34 News: SBM DIE round up

TEACHING AND LEARNING
35 Introduction
36 Mastery teaching: a model for lesson planning in maths
38 Tackling underachievement through mastery planning
41 Using assessment data to inform teaching and learning
42 Using pupils’ first language in the mainstream classroom
44 Supporting new teachers to develop their craft
45 Gifted and talented planning priorities
46 Neuroscience: what can teachers learn?
48 Transferring knowledge: why it’s difficult and what you can do about it
50 Twelve tips for staff wellbeing

SEN AND SAFEGUARDING
51 Introduction
52 Testing times: preparing pupils with SEND for assessment
56 Introducing the tool for time-poor SENCOs
58 School-led SEND provision: speech and language therapy
59 Personal vs professional in safeguarding: training activity
62 E-Safety in 2016: onwards and upwards
63 Pastoral care in a boarding setting
64 Improving SMSC provision: case study
66 Challenging conversations webinar
Coaching is now recognised as a key element of effective leadership development, and can provide critical support in a school’s improvement journey.

Optimus Education coaches provide challenging yet supportive partnerships which improve performance through developing management skills, self-awareness and the resilience to lead and thrive.

“Coaching develops leadership qualities and builds the confidence to deal with new challenges and difficult situations”

Asma Mansuri, Former Head Teacher, Qualified Executive Coach and Optimus Director of Coaching

Be the leader you want to be

try.optimus-education.com/coaching-for-success
Welcome to Optimus Education Insight

Dear Reader

When our leadership and governance editor embarked on a project to find out what schools could learn from business leaders and vice versa, the results were encouraging. Our two interviewees this month (see page 18) are astonished by the challenges that school leaders face on a daily basis, and full of admiration for their resilience in overcoming them. ‘Many school leaders I have known would earn far more working in a commercial environment, but that would not meet their sense of public duty. Thank heavens for them’ concludes Tim Brooks, CEO and school governor.

Have you or your colleagues ever wondered what your school business manager does? Turn to page 24 to read about award-winning SBMs from across the country. Now armed with their own set of professional standards, SBMs are set to shake things up!

This issue continues our exploration of what really works for effective learning. Do read the features on mastery teaching (pages 34 to 40), learning from neuroscience (page 38) and Jean Gross’s excellent unpicking of how a growth mindset will benefit learners with SEND preparing for exams (page 52).

Liz Worthen
Head of Content
Optimus Education

January 2016

Get involved in the Optimus Education network

Not yet a member?
If someone has shared this magazine with you but you don’t currently have an Optimus membership, we’d love to hear from you. Call us on 0845 450 6404 and you can speak to one of our account managers about membership options and take a demo of the website.

Want to contribute?
We work with a wide range of practitioners to bring members the most relevant, useful and up-to-date content. If you would like to contribute by writing for us or presenting at a conference, please get in touch via customer.services@optimus-education.com

Got something to share?
We offer selected opportunities for relevant suppliers to share their services with our members, from conference sponsorship to magazine advertising. To find out more about these opportunities, contact Matt or Chris on 020 7265 4173.

Remember to visit the website at my.optimus-education.com
Conference Calendar

Optimus Education’s one-day conferences bring school leaders and managers together, helping you go back to your school ready to implement practical strategies and new policies that work. Find out what’s coming up in your focus area.

April

Rethinking Lesson Observations: From Performance to Professional Learning
TUESDAY, 26 APRIL, LONDON
Attend this training day for research updates on sustainable teacher development through observation and gain strategies to lead an effective transition to ungraded, developmental observation.
Teaching and Learning

Teaching Schools Summit 2016
TUESDAY, 26 APRIL, 2016
This unique day is packed with exciting networking opportunities, high-quality content and practical support to ensure your Teaching School is driving school improvement and generating a sustainable income.
Leadership and Governance

May

Employment Law in Education 2016
THURSDAY, 5 MAY, LONDON & WEDNESDAY, 8 JUNE, MANCHESTER
Get vital legal guidance to support you through the employment law challenges you could face in the coming year, such as staffing restructures in the face of shrinking budgets or managing staff absence.
School Business Management

14th Annual SENCO Update conference
TUESDAY, 24 MAY, 2016
Meet your duties in line with the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice, hear from leading experts, learn from other practitioners and support improved outcomes and progress for children and young people with SEND.
SEN and Safeguarding

September

Child Protection in Education 2016
THURSDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER, 2016 & THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER, 2016
Book your place now for this popular annual event to get legal guidance and vital updates on your most pressing safeguarding issues.
SEN and Safeguarding

For a full list of our upcoming conferences, half-day briefings and training days please visit my.optimus-education.com/conferences. For further information or booking queries please call the conference team on 0207 954 3421.

Unlimited CPD is here
Now you can attend all our conferences for one annual cost... as well as having full access to our Knowledge Centre and over 40 download-and-deliver professional training courses.
What’s in this month’s Leadership and Governance section?

Data is a big focus in this issue, with advice on what data secondary schools will need to understand and analyse in the transition phase. We also look at ways to ensure staff use new systems and assessment models consistently and provide a handy checklist to track progress in implementing a new system. Prepare staff for Ofsted by using our checklist for deputies and assistant heads. Log in online and you’ll find checklists for other staff members too. Two school governors give us their take on the essentials of leadership from the world of business. Finally, it’s that time of year when school allocations are sent out and the chief schools adjudicator has released her annual report. We’ve summarised the key findings and recommendations, as well as featuring our ready-made admissions model policy – all you need to do is adapt for your setting.

Lisa Griffin, Content Lead

Contributors in this issue

John Viner served as a primary headteacher for 28 years. He is currently a writer, teacher trainer and consultant. John has also inspected for Ofsted for more than 10 years.

Josephine Smith is acting headteacher of a school in Lincolnshire, educational writer and research associate for the National College. Her books include The School Recruitment Handbook.

Paul K. Ainsworth is a former headteacher and currently an academy advisor. His books include The Senior Leader’s Yearbook: A handbook for implementing outstanding school systems.

Lisa Griffin is content lead for leadership and governance. An experienced editor and content manager, Lisa is interested in leadership support and development.

Top tweets from @OptimusEd

Overcoming communication barriers for better parental engagement - ideas for moving things forward http://owl.li/X46rl
In-house training in line with the Prevent duty requirements http://owl.li/XICLH

Forgotten your log-in details or want to add more members from your school or organisation?
Email our customer services team at customer.services@optimus-education.com or call us on 0845 450 6404.

Be part of the Optimus Leadership and Governance network

Live Chat
Can’t find what you’re looking for on optimus-education.com? Click on the Live Chat or Help button (left hand side of the screen) and connect with our customer services team.

Ask the Experts
Got a specific question? Get in touch with our expert panel by submitting your query via optimus-education.com/ask-question

Twitter
Want to get engaged in discussion and connect with your peers? Follow us on Twitter @OptimusEd

Download a digital version of your Optimus Education Insight magazine by logging into your My Account area on optimus-education.com
Transition from Year 6 to the end of KS3: data to collect and analyse

From September 2016, Y7 pupils will not transfer with Key Stage 2 levels. PAUL AINSWORTH explains what data secondary schools will need to understand and analyse in the transition

Just as in secondary schools, primary schools need to develop their own assessment system in key stages 1 and 2. There has been a key difference between KS2 and KS3 though.

Age-related expectation
In KS2 the government has set out its expectation as to what a pupil should be able to perform by the end of each year. This is known as the ‘age-related expectation.’

The following, for example, is the content in KS2 maths for the first element of statistics (see below).

This extra detail has meant that many primary schools are using this to decide if pupils have achieved the age-related expectation for that year group.

If pupils have a strong grasp of the learning objective for that year, the teacher then has to decide if they have achieved ‘mastery.’

Primary schools are using their own terminology to describe the attainment and progress of pupils who have not reached age-related expectation.

KS2 test framework
The test frameworks and the age-related expectations for maths, English grammar, punctuation and spelling and English reading can be found online at www.gov.uk

Scaled scores
Scaled scores will be used to allow comparison in future years to be more straightforward:
- a pupil who meets the national standard will receive a score of 100
- a pupil below the standard will score below 100
- a pupil above the standard will receive a score over 100.

The DfE have said that secondary schools and secondary school teachers will be able ‘to view their incoming pupils’ scaled scores so that they can prepare for their new intake.’

Collecting and analysing attainment and progress data in KS3
Though each secondary school will be developing their own tracking system, for all incoming Year 7s the secondary school will know the pupil’s raw score, scaled score and whether they have reached the national standard.

It would then be expected that schools will track or measure attainment and progress over KS3 and ask whether they are on track to reach the national standard at 16.

In KS2 primary schools are expected to assess whether pupils are working above this standard. It could be expected that the same is true in secondary schools, so that data is also collected on pupils who are working above national expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Year 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td><strong>3S1</strong>: Interpret and present data using bar charts, pictograms and tables</td>
<td><strong>4S1</strong>: Interpret and present discrete and continuous data using appropriate graphical methods, including bar charts and time graphs</td>
<td><strong>5S1</strong>: Complete, read and interpret information in tables including timetables</td>
<td><strong>6S1</strong>: Interpret and construct pie charts and line graphs and use these to solve problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'Seven test scores, do secondary school teachers get a true assessment of the level at which pupils were working at in Y6?'
Accurate data is vital to improving transition to year 7

**Qualitative data on pupil progress**

One of the questions around transition is, even with test scores, do secondary school teachers get a true assessment of the level at which pupils were working at in Y6? This is particularly true for the presentation and quality of classwork.

Some secondary schools have begun to ask primaries for an example of a pupil's English and maths work. This is then copied and placed in their Y7 book.

This can be fascinating for secondary school teachers to see as they may not have been aware of the standard that the pupil was expected to produce in primary school.

It's then easy for the teacher to have a conversation with the pupil about what they are capable of producing. A similar process can occur every time a secondary pupil has a new teacher.

Some schools have recognised how powerful this approach can be in giving a physical representation of the progress that the pupils are making during KS3, rather than just relying on numerical measures.

**Wider data**

Schools will also collect and analyse a range of pastoral data on their pupils in KS3. The attendance of pupils will be collected and then analysed against national figures and by pupil groups, as will exclusion figures.

Many schools will then look at behaviour information in more detail. This could be positive information such as house points, credits or Vivo (or equivalent).

It could also be information such as behaviour points, detention or seclusion figures, which should be analysed against pupil groups such as pupil premium or boys/girls.

Some schools will keep records of the enrichment opportunities that pupils participate in. In the past this may have been limited to residential trips which pupils attended.

However with more powerful management information systems and smart cards or finger print technology, registers could be kept of every time a pupil attends an extra-curricular event or goes on a trip.

**The impact of data**

What you do with data, rather than just the collection of it, is the key thing. When you collect KS2 data, what impact does it have on the Y7 teacher?

If you are collecting behaviour and attendance data during KS3, how are you using it to improve those pupils' outcomes? It is these interventions and actions that are vital to improving transition.
Staff and data: using new systems and assessment models consistently

How do you ensure staff are accountable for data and grading consistently? JOSEPHINE SMITH suggests ways to use systems accurately and a checklist for tracking progress

With recent changes to the curriculum, including the removal of levels and the introduction of Progress 8, ensuring a reliable and accurate assessment system is crucial.

If you can’t assume that staff are using consistent measures of progress, then the rest of the data produced by your monitoring and accountability systems is unreliable.

The leadership team
Spend time in the early stages of your new system allowing staff to discuss what a Grade 9 GCSE looks like in their subject area or what ‘foundation’, ‘developing’, ‘secure’ and ‘mastery’ level work might look like in the summer term of Year 8 for them. Time spent defining what success looks like will promote consistency when it comes to assessment of work and lead to fruitful discussions about what the best work might look like, helping teachers be really ambitious for their pupils.

Next you need to ensure the school tracking system is still fit for purpose. Staff are more likely to refer to the data if it’s easy to access and manipulate.

Include sessions on SMART assessment strategies in your teaching and learning CPD planning. After all, the new Ofsted framework judgement is no longer ‘teaching and learning’ but ‘teaching, learning and assessment’.

Data collection and sharing systems should be understood by staff, pupils and parents. Once you’ve trained staff in consistent assessment practices, the leadership team’s job is to collect, store and interpret data, and provide access to it again in a user friendly form. The more of this leaders (or the data tracking and analysis systems they introduce) can do on behalf of subject leaders, the more time subject leaders are assessing work accurately.

The best way to tell whether staff are consistently applying new assessment systems is through the use of quality assurance systems. Our early work scrutiny revealed that a handful of colleagues were treating our new KS3 assessment grades as national curriculum equivalencies. This suggested that we needed to do more work on communicating that the new system focused on judging individual progress against a personal target, rather than attainment against a national set of grade criteria.

Ensure parents understand the new systems too. You’ll need to rephrase tracking or report letters sent home and it would be a good idea to include some parental reference materials on the website to illustrate the new system.

Middle leaders
Here the focus is on understanding, and helping colleagues understand, how to apply the new assessment system in their subject area. Middle leaders should consider:

• whether their own quality assurance systems are in place to monitor consistency of assessment
• what tools they are providing colleagues with, such as level descriptors for learning objectives and to refer to when marking key assessment pieces
• peer moderation activities as a way to generate discussion about the application of new assessment systems. They also provide middle leaders with a clear idea of which
colleagues need additional support in the implementation of the new system and whose pupil estimates will need closer scrutiny

- portfolios of best examples of pupil work at particular levels as a way of providing a reference point for colleagues. These are especially helpful for use outside of meetings or when colleagues just want to check their own accuracy against a standardised measure
- including assessment as a regular item on the department meeting agenda. Subject leaders could encourage colleagues to bring a couple of assessed pieces of work or good exercise books and include time to browse each other’s work.

Classroom teachers

- Class teachers need to make sure that assessment data is used to challenge and support pupils to improve. Pupils need to know why they have got the mark or feedback they have and what their teacher wants them to do next to keep improving.
- Most pupils like to see the criteria they are being judged against so encourage colleagues to put some time and energy into sharing success criteria with pupils. This is especially important early on in a course but teachers should keep returning to it and using the same school language to describe progress and success as a course develops.
- One way to develop necessary confidence in new systems is for mutually supportive colleagues to share their experience and practice within the new systems. Peer-led moderation sessions and opportunities for discussion are practical ways of helping colleagues feel they are on the right lines (or if they are not, give practical support to help them be so).

Establishing the right system to use and getting subject leaders, and then classroom teachers, on board is key to effective implementation. It will likely take a year or two once your new system is in place to embed it and ensure its accuracy.

Use this checklist to see how far your school has got in making sure everyone is working in the same way. The months are included as a rough timeline for the introduction of a new assessment system and early quality assurance of it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When?</th>
<th>What?</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March-May</td>
<td>Establish working parties, research, discuss and decide on the assessment system your school wishes to adopt at KS3 and 4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Brief all subject leaders on their role in introducing the new system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-July</td>
<td>Pilot and review your new assessment system with identified groups. Require all subject leaders to design assessment and progress maps (e.g. descriptors of what success might look like at different stages). Have information ready for the school website, staff and pupils arriving in September. Introduce school council members to new system and seek their views. Brief governors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Use inset day(s) to launch new system with staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late September</td>
<td>Conduct a learning walk to see the new assessment system in operation. Address any significant misconceptions with staff or departments. Schedule department time for moderation and discussion activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Collect first tracking data using new system and analyse it. Brief parents on new systems (either face to face, in a school newsletter, a letter home, or by sharing of tracking information).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Conduct work scrutiny as well as pupil focus groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Review findings of learning walk, work scrutiny and pupil views at subject leaders meeting. Invite input of staff. Decide on any adjustments to system or interventions with particular colleagues or subject areas. Plan next CPD opportunities on assessment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Ofsted inspection checklist for deputy and assistant headteachers

JOHN VINER offers a handy guide for deputy headteachers and assistant heads to follow to help prepare for an inspection

Once your school has had the call to announce an Ofsted inspection there are immediate steps to take to ensure the process is as stress-free as possible. Inspectors will make judgements in four areas:
• effectiveness of leadership and management
• quality of teaching, learning and assessment
• personal development, behaviour and welfare
• outcomes for children and learners.

We’ve put together a range of questions to ask of yourself and your team and a checklist to help you in being Ofsted-ready.

Effectiveness of leadership and management
• Does the leadership team provide a clear vision and sense of common purpose among staff?
• How does the leadership team ensure that all judgements about performance are based on sound evidence?
• How does the leadership team promote and evidence CPD?
• How do we as a school demonstrate a commitment to equality and inclusion?

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
• How do teachers ensure that all children are appropriately challenged?
• How do teachers keep track of progress?
• What do teachers do when they see children underachieving?
• Do we know which teaching styles work and why?
• Can these styles be applied in those parts of the school where results need to improve?

Personal development, behaviour and welfare
• Do pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships?
• How is behaviour linked to the school ethos?
• What do our pupils say about bullying and prejudice and how it impacts upon their safety and learning?

Outcomes for children and learners
• How is our school currently performing?
• Are our children making better or worse than expected rates of progress?
• How does it compare with that of similar schools?
• Have some subjects or year groups shown a marked improvement this year? If so, why?
• What are the key areas of improvement needed in the school?

Be prepared
You can prepare all your staff for a visit from Ofsted and help ensure they know what to expect with the rest of our Ofsted checklists. Log in and go to my.optimus-education.com/ofsted-survival-pack-checklists-and-myth-busting to download this checklist and others for:
• headteachers
• SBMs
• class teachers
• gifted and talented coordinators
• pastoral leads
• DSPs
• governors.

Find out about the experience of a school recently inspected under the CIF online at my.optimus-education.com/case-study-ofsted-inspection-under-new-cif
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>What to check</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and safety</td>
<td>I understand my role in supporting and promoting the school’s behaviour management policy and can explain it to the inspection team.</td>
<td>During the inspection I have made alternative plans to deal with disciplinary issues that I might be unable to handle because of conflicting priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>I can explain how the curriculum has been developed and how pupils’ progress is assessed in each subject.</td>
<td>I play a key role in maintaining the school’s programme of assemblies that are used to promote pupils’ SMSC development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>I have intimate knowledge of the school’s data and can explain it to inspectors in relation to vulnerable groups, year groups and classes.</td>
<td>I can explain how the way the school tracks pupils’ progress across the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>I regularly walk around the school to ensure that the environment is stimulating, and that notice boards and displays are up-to-date and effectively presented.</td>
<td>On the eve of the inspection I will carry out a brief check of the school’s learning environment for accuracy and effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>I know how pupils with SEN and EAL are performing relative to both their peers and national figures, and can explain it to the inspection team.</td>
<td>I know how pupils with SEN and looked-after children ready and available for the inspection team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know how the school is using the pupil premium, which pupils it supports and how it has impacted on their achievement.</td>
<td>I understand how ‘Progression guidance’ is used to set targets for pupils with SEN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I understand how ‘Progression guidance’ is used to set targets for pupils with SEN.</td>
<td>There are case studies of SEN and looked-after children ready and available for the inspection team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspection</td>
<td>I am aware of the relevant inspection documentation and know how it will be used to shape the inspection.</td>
<td>Where appropriate, I am aware of the relevant subject documentation and use it to support my work and that of my colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am aware of the relevant inspection documentation and know how it will be used to shape the inspection.</td>
<td>There is a plan in place that will ensure I am available during the inspection for joint lesson observations and discussions with the inspection team.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>What to check</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and learning</td>
<td>I can demonstrate that I regularly observe lessons, sometimes jointly with the headteacher. I provide written feedback and use the information to set and support targets for improvement.</td>
<td>I can explain where the strengths and weaknesses lie in teaching across the school. I can show that I play an active role in coaching and monitoring for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a clear understanding of how teaching assistants are deployed, the pupils they support and the impact they have on the school’s quality of teaching.</td>
<td>I have a clear understanding of how teaching assistants are deployed, the pupils they support and the impact they have on the school’s quality of teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I understand the Teachers’ Standards and use them when monitoring lessons and when planning support for my colleagues.</td>
<td>I understand the Teachers’ Standards and use them when monitoring lessons and when planning support for my colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>I understand how the school’s CPD is planned and delivered and know how this impacts on raising achievement across the school.</td>
<td>I have a key role in the school’s performance management systems and can explain how appraisal is used to set targets for school improvement and for the professional development of colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management</td>
<td></td>
<td>I have a key role in the school’s performance management systems and can explain how appraisal is used to set targets for school improvement and for the professional development of colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I monitor the delivery of my subject and know what its strengths and weaknesses are. I know how well teachers provide feedback to pupils and how successfully this leads to improvement.</td>
<td>I monitor the delivery of my subject and know what its strengths and weaknesses are. I know how well teachers provide feedback to pupils and how successfully this leads to improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>If I have a subject responsibility I have an excellent understanding of the standards and progress that pupils achieve in each year and against national standards at the end of each key stage.</td>
<td>If I have a subject responsibility I have an excellent understanding of the standards and progress that pupils achieve in each year and against national standards at the end of each key stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>I understand the Teachers’ Standards and use them when monitoring lessons and when planning support for my colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I work successfully with the headteacher and governors to secure teachers’ accountability for the progress of their pupils, including those with SEN, EAL and from other vulnerable groups.</td>
<td>I work successfully with the headteacher and governors to secure teachers’ accountability for the progress of their pupils, including those with SEN, EAL and from other vulnerable groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>I make a contribution to the school’s self-evaluation. I understand and can discuss the school’s strengths and weaknesses and explain the actions the school is taking to improve.</td>
<td>I make a contribution to the school’s self-evaluation. I understand and can discuss the school’s strengths and weaknesses and explain the actions the school is taking to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>I am involved in setting, implementing and monitoring the school’s improvement plan and can explain how the priorities it sets out were determined and how their impact will be measured.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.optimus-education.com  OPTIMUS EDUCATION INSIGHT
Headteacher interviews: advice and example questions

Be prepared for a headship interview with our outline of what the interview involves. LISA GRIFFIN provides guidance and example questions you may be asked.

The interview process is commonly run over two days, though this can go into three days.

The first day will be task-based and the second day will most often be a presentation and interview conducted by a panel of governors and representatives of the local authority, where appropriate.

Tasks undertaken on day one may include those listed below.

Day 1
- Data analysis
- Observing a lesson
- Delivering an assembly
- In-tray exercise
- Panel interviews
- Student council meeting

Data analysis
You should be familiar with RAISEonline data from your own school but try and gain as much insight as possible about the school hiring before you arrive, such as from the DfE performance tables and Ofsted school data dashboard. If you have a good understanding of the issues of the school you will better be able to analyse any data in the context of that school.

There is a wide range of data you may be asked to analyse, including levels of progress matrices or data on key or vulnerable groups. You will be expected to understand and interpret the data, explain what strategies you would implement to plan school improvement and how you would measure the success of these strategies.

Observing a lesson
This exercise will be made up of two parts. You will need to show an ability to identify the key strengths and areas for development in the teacher you are observing. You will also likely be asked to feedback your observations to the teacher who led the lesson and you will be assessed on the way you provide constructive feedback.

It would be useful to go through the Ofsted criteria for teaching, learning and assessment to keep in mind what you could observe in another teacher’s lesson.

Delivering an assembly
You may be asked to deliver an assembly to the whole or part of the school. You will be judged on how you come across, how you engage the audience and whether you speak with authority and composure.

In-tray exercises
You will be presented with a list of various tasks or scenarios in the day in the life of a headteacher. Designed to assess how you cope with wide-ranging responsibilities, you will be asked how you would prioritise those tasks and be expected to explain why you prioritised in that order.

The in-tray items may include:
- writing a letter to a parent
- returning a phone call from the local authority regarding missing data
- dealing with an incident between two pupils.

Panel interviews
These will be carried out by a variety of mini panels, including middle and senior leaders in the school. You will be asked questions around key themes such as your vision for the school, how you develop staff, your leadership experiences and HR issues.

The panels will feed back their observations to the main interview panel.
Student council meeting
If you are asked to attend a meeting with a panel of pupils, you’ll be asked questions by them which have been agreed by senior staff beforehand. Staff will also have agreed the criteria with which to rate candidates and a member of the interview panel will be present. The reason behind this part of the interview is to give young people a greater say in the lives of their schools and to give candidates a different view of the school.

The variety of tasks will be scored and the best-performing three or four candidates will be invited back for an interview and to give a presentation the next day.

Day 2
The interview panel must include at least three governors and will likely be made up of an odd number so that a majority decision can be reached. There may also be a HR advisor and LA representative present to ensure procedures are followed.

The interview will include a 10-15 minute presentation by the candidates. It may be that the topic is only chosen by the panel at the end of the first day and is usually something that each particular school has as their priority. These priorities may range from strategies to move the school forward to the most pressing challenges currently.

Example interview questions

Strategic direction
These questions will focus on areas such as the vision and ethos of the school and your leadership skills.
- How would you ensure that this school is effective?
- Describe your recent experience of leading a whole school initiative.
- From your experience, what steps are needed to turn a policy on paper into effective practice?
- Give examples of two recent legislations, one you feel positive about, the other negative, and why.

Educational focus
You will be asked questions around driving attainment, how to ensure outstanding teaching and learning and ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum.
- What strategies would you use to effectively monitor and evaluate teaching and learning?
- How would you ensure consistent curriculum coverage?
- How are targets set and monitored?
- How do we know pupils make progress with their learning year on year?

Operational management
This area will cover processes to support the day-to-day running of the school, budget management and maintain a high-performing team.
- How would you manage the school budget?
- How would you drive efficiencies through the current budget?
- What strategies would you use to support a member of staff not achieving a satisfactory level of performance?
- How do you ensure a high level of pastoral care for pupils and staff?
Leadership and Governance
Leadership Skills

Essentials of leadership: learning from business

Schools, like any organisation, need strong leadership to be successful. LISA GRIFFIN spoke to leaders outside of education to explore the similarities and differences between schools and businesses.

‘It may be that schools can learn from business, but business leaders also have much to learn from school leaders’

Having served on our local comprehensive’s governing body for some years, I believe that business people should be generous with their time and expertise to help their local schools. However, I do not think that we should make the category error of confounding schools and business.

It may be that schools can learn from business, but business leaders also have much to learn from school leaders. The latter have to manage a group of ‘customers’ who typically have little or no choice, and do not personally experience the service offered, but only hear about it from often unreliable, juvenile witnesses.

School leaders cannot grow the market: it is a zero-sum game. They cannot invest for future growth: costs and revenue are extremely tightly matched, and it is illegal to set a negative budget. Most school leaders cannot choose their customer group (school promotion material will not state ‘our school is targeting the studious/artistic/bilingual’ for example) but must treat, as a customer, anyone randomly living within a stone’s throw of their gates.

Those customers’ views will be disproportionately shaped by a random two-day inspection which may be several years out of date, and which is much less objective than a company’s annual financial audit. They are also, conversely, subject to annual and very public national benchmarking which is far more rigorous and detailed than businesses experience.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, school leaders devote huge amounts of time, thought, care, energy and patience into inculcating good habits of mind, independence of thought, and personal responsibility into their pupils. Of course there are schools which struggle – just as there are many, many businesses which struggle (Serco, G4S, Tesco, First Group, anyone?).

Many school leaders I have known would earn far more working in a commercial environment, but that would not meet their sense of public duty. Thank heavens for them.

If I were leading a school I would firstly determine who the customer is – usually the one that pays. Directly this is the government, indirectly the parent through taxes. However, in the state sector
Leadership Skills

The better the processes which manage the day-to-day tasks and minor decisions the more time there is available for strategic thinking and problem solving.

What the customer wants or needs. Needs are non-discretionary, whereas wants may be discretionary depending on the core provision or whether they are ‘nice to do or have.’ This is where judgement comes in.

The controversy then occurs as to how those judgements are made. Are they made by the school leader, or by the front line, the teacher in direct contact with the pupil? This is where leadership and management come in, and is the core of business principles.

Simply put, well-managed companies are successful and poorly managed companies fail. The best companies have a clear vision, a recognisable and appropriate culture, and refined sustainable processes.

I personally believe in organisations with an inverted pyramid. This is where, on a day-to-day basis, everyone is organised to support the front line. In the case of a school the front line is the teacher giving the lesson to the class.

The head of department or team leader is there to support the teacher in making sure they have the resources, skills and motivation the strategy demands. The headteacher is there to provide the team leader with equal support. The governors are there to provide the headteacher with similar support.

Any learning improvements at the front line are shared directly between all the teachers on the front line. This ongoing communication loop helps break down silos as well as facilitating speedy sharing of strategies for progress. A key management technique is for the team leader to make sure this happens.

In a traditional organisation all information and decisions flow up and down the lines of authority and the majority of decisions are made at the top, by the leader. In an inverted pyramid the majority of decisions are made at the front line. This also applies to expenditure based on delegated financial authorities.

To have a smoothly operating inverted pyramid requires a lot of training, a cultural shift, and time. It is cost effective, decisions are quick, and motivation is increased. However, to implement and work well the processes have to be first class and robust.

Questions arise as to how decisions are made, for example on curricula, capital expenditure or changes in budget. This is where common sense in any organisational structure comes in, based on a matter of balance.

The school leader will always be held ultimately responsible for the success of the school, and it is their skill that will determine the smooth running of such a management style. This style of organisation does not allow the headteacher to abrogate responsibilities. If the head is a control freak then do not attempt such a structure. If, however, there is a sense of trust at all levels then the system is effective.

So business principles are based on identifying the customer (pupil), clearly defining the purpose and strategy and then identifying clear lines of communication and authority, underpinned by sustainable processes.

Many organisations keep on reinventing the wheel which is time and energy consuming and detracts from a customer focus. The better the processes which manage the day-to-day tasks and minor decisions the more time there is available for strategic thinking and problem solving.

For more on leadership skills, head online and log into my.optimus-education.com/topic/leadership-skills for resources, articles and webinars.

# Leadership and Governance

Secondary Book 1.indb   17
16/02/2016   14:31
Preventing extremism and radicalisation: governing body update

Advice for schools on preventing children and young people from being drawn into terrorism is now in place. KATIE RENTON looks at how our compact governor briefing can ensure every member of your governing body remains up-to-date and can hold your school to account.

The safeguarding of all pupils is paramount to each and every school. However, tackling extremism and radicalisation is a huge and, importantly, unfamiliar challenge for schools.

There is no doubt that recently there has been a particular focus on the importance of identifying and preventing the draw of radicalisation. The responsibility held by schools is multifaceted and potentially daunting, meaning the consideration of a whole-school approach is crucial.

The governing body must be equipped to hold your school to account, ensuring that all staff are being trained accordingly (a responsibility which is now statutory) and that the school is adhering to the necessary demands of the Prevent duty.

This duty, outlined in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, requires schools to ‘have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.’

Remaining up-to-date with these guidelines and knowing the right questions to ask are two crucial components of a governors’ role in preventing extremism and radicalisation. In order to support your governing body with this, we have summarised the key points in our clear and concise briefing.

Download the PowerPoint presentation and deliver it in 15 minutes during your next governor meeting, or distribute the short reference guide for governors to read.

This is hosted as part of your In-House Training membership, but here is a taster of the briefing for you to consider. Find the rest online at my.optimus-education.com/training/governor-briefings/preventing-extremism-and-radicalisation

Aims and outcomes

- Understand the legal definitions of both radicalisation and extremism.
- Know what is expected of schools in response to these issues and how to promote ‘British values’.
- Identify the key questions to ask that hold your school to account.

PART 1: Definitions

What is radicalisation?
A process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo, or reject or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

What is extremism?
Extremism is defined in the Prevent strategy as: ‘vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.’

Also included in the definition of extremism is ‘the call for the death of members of our armed forces’.

The Prevent duty aims to stop individuals being drawn into terrorism. This includes violent and non-violent extremism which in turn can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorism may seek to exploit.

PART 2: School duties

Legislation: Prevent duty and Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

This key legislation is active as of July 2015, and governing bodies need to know about them in order to ensure their school is compliant and hold their school to account. Under the Prevent legislation, schools are expected to do the following.

Assess risk: schools are expected to assess the risk of children being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology.

Work in partnership: schools must
'The Prevent duty aims to stop individuals being drawn into terrorism. This includes violent and non-violent extremism which in turn can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism and can popularise views which terrorism may seek to exploit'

effectively collaborate with those in a key position to spot signs of radicalisation, such as local authorities and families.

**Identify pupils at risk:** staff training is key in equipping staff to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.

**Keeping pupils safe online:** staff need to ensure that children are safe from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in schools.

**Build pupil resilience:** schools can build pupils’ resilience to radicalisation by providing a safe environment for debating controversial issues and helping them to understand how they can participate in decision-making.

**Promote British values:** schools are already expected to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and, within this, fundamental British values.

**Radicalisation and promoting ‘British values’**

Schools are required to actively promote British values by challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to them. They must encourage:

- an understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process
- an appreciation that the law protects individual citizens and is essential for their wellbeing and safety
- an understanding that the freedom to choose other faiths and beliefs is protected in law
- a tolerance that other people have different faiths or beliefs to oneself, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour
- an understanding of the importance of identifying and combating discrimination.

**PART 3: Holding your school to account**

**Questions to ask**

In order to hold your school to account, governors may ask the following questions.

1. How are British values promoted across the whole school?
2. Are staff receiving appropriate training to ensure they are able to comply with the duty?
3. How are your risk assessment processes currently carried out? Are they robust and do they look to identify radical behaviour?
4. How confident are staff in identifying pupils vulnerable to radicalisation?
5. Do staff know how to refer concerns? Are partnerships in place with relevant external partners?
6. How do you keep pupils safe online?
7. What programmes do you have in place to build pupil resilience?
8. Is there an action plan identifying responsibilities, risks, mitigation and actions to take?
9. Is sufficient resource being identified to support the compliance with this duty?

For more on how to deliver training to staff on identifying some of the signs of radicalisation, find our downloadable training resources online at [my.optimus-education.com/in-house-training](http://my.optimus-education.com/in-house-training).

**Topical Briefings**

In addition to this governor briefing, we also have a range of other topical briefings that seek to summarise key developments in education for you to update your staff with. With a selection of governor, SLT and whole-school resources, we compile the crucial information for your staff. Examples include:

- Exam reform and Progress 8
- Disqualification by association (SLT briefing)
- The EBacc (governor briefing).

Are there any key issues that you think could be added to our briefing offering? Let us know your thoughts by emailing training@optimus-education.com

In her annual report, Dr Elizabeth Passmore states that concerns about admission arrangements continue to make up the largest part of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator’s (OSA) work and accounted for 218 of the total of 268 new cases of all types referred to the OSA. Covering the period 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015, we’ve collated the key findings and concerns from the report below.

Ongoing concerns
The OSA voiced concerns that some admissions arrangements:

- are unnecessarily complex, with schools which are their own admissions authorities more likely to be at fault
- lack transparency
- are too difficult to find on school websites or not published at all
- ask parents to fill in supplementary forms and provide information prohibited under the code
- include banding tests, which are highlighted as a particular problem with the report suggesting they can be used to increase numbers of higher ability pupils.

The report also highlights concerns about banding tests being expensive, at a cost of up to £500 per child to administer.

‘Some admissions arrangements are unnecessarily complex’

and the effects and purpose of banding on children.

Recommendations
In her final report as chief schools adjudicator, Dr Passmore has urged the DfE to consider whether the code should apply to admissions to sixth forms or whether there should instead be some flexibility in the processes they use. This follows the report from last year where it was found that too many sixth form admissions arrangements lacked an admission number and did not include oversubscription criteria. Dr Passmore has advised that some sample admission arrangements should be provided to help schools avoid having unnecessarily complex processes.

The provision concerning who can make an objection to admission arrangements should be reviewed and possibly be limited to those with proper standing for making an objection.

Other key findings
- Overall 218 admissions cases were dealt with in 2014-15, down from 274 the previous year.
- The number upheld or partially upheld rose to 159, up from 99 in 2013-14.
- Local authorities withdrew 284 offers of school places because of fraud, up from 186 the previous year.
- The majority of these places – 211 – were related to primary schools.
- Dr Passmore was ‘surprised and concerned’ by an increase in the number of schools who operate as their own admissions authorities, employing lawyers to deal with objections to the criteria they use to admit children.

Webinar
Catch up on our recent webinar: ‘Admissions - what does a compliant and well planned consultation look like?’ Log on and head to my.optimus-education.com/webinar-admissions-what-does-compliant-and-well-planned-consultation-look

Hear expert advice and guidance from education lawyer Richard Freeth and ensure your school is compliant with the school admissions code.

Download and personalise our admissions model policy from my.optimus-education/admissions-model-policy
Admissions model policy

Maintained schools and academies must publish details of their admissions arrangements. Use our admissions policy template to create one for your school.

The statutory admissions policy must be in line with the school admissions code to ensure a fair and transparent admissions procedure for all applicants. It is also a guide and source of information for parents.

In association with our legal partners Browne Jacobson, we’ve created a comprehensive set of templates for each statutory school policy, including the admissions one below.

Customise the template to meet the specific needs of your setting, help ensure you’re prepared for an Ofsted inspection and clearly demonstrate your legal compliance with statutory requirements.

Introduction

The admission authority for [name of school] is [name of school GB/LA/academy trust]. This policy is in line with government legislation and guidance (School Admissions Code 2014) and is designed to ensure there is a fair admissions procedure for all applicants, and to help guide parents and their children through the application process.

This policy will apply to all admissions from September 20XX including in-year admissions.

Closing date for applications for school year 20XX/20XX: [closing date]

We cannot guarantee that applications received after this date will be considered in the case of over subscription.

Note: You may wish to add something about your school’s catchment area if applicable.

1. Admissions procedure

For the school year commencing September 20XX the planned admissions number (PAN) is XX for entry into [set out PANs for each relevant year of entry – R, Year 3, 7, 9 and 12].

1.1 Applying for a place

[Name of school] welcomes all applications. We have [two/three] main intake levels; reception/year 7/sixth form. We encourage entry at these times so as to aid the progression of the child academically without interruption, however, children are welcome to apply for entry in any year.

Parents are encouraged to visit the school with their child if they are planning to apply for a place and we have a number of open days during the year. Arrangements for visits outside of these dates can be made through the school office.

Children are admitted to the school using the criteria outlined in this policy. In no way does the academic ability of the child come into consideration when places at the school are being allocated. Parents are invited to express a preference for the school out of those provided by the [pupil admissions, transfers and exclusions office], but it is up to the [GB/LA/academy trust] to decide which children will be given a place.

Note: Include guidelines about supplementary information forms and aptitude tests if your school has them (dates and locations). You should also include information about late applications, how they are handled and deadlines for submitting changed information.

1.2 Oversubscription

In the case of oversubscription, priority will be given to applicants without a statement of special educational need or education, health and care plan as follows:

Note: Please fill in your order of priority in the case of oversubscription. Looked after and previously looked after children must always be given highest priority. This section should include an explanation of your tie-breaking procedures such as random allocation. Please consider the School Admissions Code 2014 paragraphs 1.9–1.39B for ‘commonly used criteria’.

1.3 Admissions into sixth form

Both internal and external applicants will have to have met the minimum academic requirements to gain entry to the sixth form. Where spaces become available, external
'Children who have special educational needs but who do not have a SEN statement or EHCP will be treated equally to all other applicants in the admissions process'.

applicants will follow the same application procedure outlined in this policy. Where there are more external applications than places, the oversubscription criteria set out at 1.2 will be applied.

1.4 Children with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education, health and care plan (EHCP)
The school will admit all children who have a SEN statement or EHCP where this school is named.

Children who have special educational needs but who do not have a SEN statement or EHCP will be treated equally to all other applicants in the admissions process. This includes children who may need extra support or reasonable adjustments to be made. The school will do everything it can to accommodate these pupils. See our SEN policy for details of special provision provided by the school.

1.5 In-year admissions
The process for in-year admissions is the same for admissions at the start of the academic year.

In-year admissions forms can be acquired through the Pupil Admissions Team of the LA or by contacting the school directly. In-year admissions usually take place after a half term.

The governing body/LA/Academy Trust has the right to refuse the admission of children who have been permanently excluded from two or more schools, if the last time was less than two years ago.

Note: You may wish to include the contact details of your LA or the pupil admissions, transfers and exclusions office here, or at the end of this policy.

In-year fair access protocol
[Name of school] works with our LA in accordance with their in-year fair access policy. [Include details of the applicable fair access protocol here].

2. Offers
Note: This section should outline details of when and how offers are made.

The school may withdraw its offer if it is found that the place was offered based on a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application. The offer may also be withdrawn if the school has not heard back from the parent or carer of the child in writing within the XX days’ acceptance period.

3. Appeals
Parents or carers can appeal to the independent appeal panel against refusal of admission to the school. In order to ensure a fair appeals process, the members of the panel do not belong to the governing body/academy trust and/or local authority that made the original decision against the application.

A child is allowed to be on the school waiting list while lodging an appeal and the appeal will not affect their position on the list. The decision of the appeals panel is binding on the admissions authority.

4. Waiting list
The school operates a waiting list which is maintained until [date – must be at least the autumn term of the year of entry]. Parents may request that their child is placed on the waiting list. The list will set out the priority for places in the same order set out in the oversubscription criteria. The child may gain entry to the school if the number of pupils falls below the admissions limit of the school.

If a child on the waiting list is offered a position at the school, they will be notified by letter and will have the option of accepting or rejecting the place within XX days.

5. Changes to admission arrangements
The admission arrangements for the school may be changed by the admission authority in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation. Parents will be consulted on any changes prior to their implementation.

Parents must notify the school immediately if there are any changes that may affect their child's application, such as a change of address. Where the child has multiple addresses, the address given to the school should be the one where the child spends the majority of the school week. If it is an equal split, the parents can decide which address to give.

6. Contacts
[Name of school] office
Address:
Tel:
Fax:
Email:
Headteacher: [Name]

Note: you may wish to include the contact details of your LA or the pupil admissions, transfers and exclusions office.

Signed
Headteacher
Date:
Governor
Date:
What’s in this month’s School Business Management section?

Welcome to a new year! We have some fantastic new content to help guide you through the challenges that lie ahead. We have the SBM March checklist that has been updated and verified by a range of experts, a breakdown of the new pupil premium funding for 2016-17 and some responses to members’ queries as part of the ‘Ask the Expert’ service. While most people agree that the DfE’s reports are beneficial for informing SBMs of change, especially when it comes to funding or legislation, the sheer volume of information can seem overwhelming. Fear not: we have taken the time to read each report and select the key findings so you don’t have to. And, following the fantastic NASBM awards in December, we have a report on this inspiring day. Enjoy!

Alex Masters, Content Lead

Contributors in this issue

Nickii Messer was an SBM for many years, including seven years in the SLT. She now works as a consultant and is Anglia Ruskin’s operational lead for Teaching and Leadership SBM programmes.

Alex Masters is content lead at Optimus Education, focusing on school business management. She previously taught English at an academy in Kent.

Matthew Wheeler leads the support staff at Bordesley Green Girls’ School and is head of the NASBM professional standards. He is also a corporate governance specialist with 18 years’ board level experience of education.

Russell Dalton is finance and business director at Pershore High School. He has been in school business management roles for many years and before that had a successful military career.

Top tweets from @BusinessOE

- Key benefits of attending our Close the Gap event #oeCTG @Pupil_Premium. Don’t miss out! ow.ly/WWuJv
- New #slideshare presentation for you to #download! Evaluating teacher performance fairly ow.ly/XeFEC
- Exciting: @katiecpd book 'maximise your income' now available to pre-order http://ow.ly/UhAF8
- Worried about the severe weather? Check out this emergency template ow.ly/WDZMX #floods

Forgotten your log-in details or want to add more members from your school or organisation? Email our customer services team at customer.services@optimus-education.com or call us on 0845 450 6404.

Be part of the Optimus School Business Management network

- Live Chat
  Can’t find what you’re looking for on optimus-education.com? Click on the Live Chat or Help button and connect with our customer services team.

- Ask the Experts
  Got a specific question? Get in touch with our expert panel by submitting your query via optimus-education.com/ask-question

- Twitter
  Want to get engaged in discussion and connect with your peers? Follow us on Twitter @BusinessOE

Download a digital version of your Optimus Education Insight magazine by logging into your My Account area on optimus-education.com
SBMs: let's take a moment to celebrate

The year 2015 has been seen as a coming of age for school business managers. And the future is looking bright: ALEX MASTERS explains

'The time for school business management has come. We have stormed the barricades and we have tunneled under the walls to advance our cause.' If ever you're in need of an inspiring speech about school business management then Matthew Wheeler, head of professional standards at NASBM, is your man.

Matthew gave his impromptu, impassioned speech at the recent NASBM awards, held in December at the glittering Kings Place in London with a direct view of Regents Canal. Walking into the room, the atmosphere was buzzing: school business managers and sponsors from across the country were gathered, talking, laughing and enjoying the champagne. And as it should be: we need to celebrate this incredible, often misunderstood profession.

So it was a joy to hear Matthew speak at the awards. He was brimming with pride. 'Wow!' he said as he scanned the crowd. 'What a wonderful profession school business management is.' He noted also how wonderful it was to have so many business managers from primaries and special schools to academies and secondary schools.

Coming of age

Indeed, 2015 did feel like the year school business management came of age. With ever-rising standards in education, shrinking budgets and expanding academies, the role of the SBM has never been more crucial and the correlation between school business management and child learning is more distinct than a lot of people appreciate. 'The life chances of a child depend on the resources and environment in which they are taught, and the quality and enthusiasm of the teachers working in that environment,' said Stephen Morales, chief executive of NASBM.

'How do we make sure quality resources, teachers and funding are available? If you don't get the operational bits right – human resources (HR), risk assessment, collaboration – then you're vulnerable to austerity and cost pressures.'

Team effort

The awards brought together the most successful and high achieving SBMs and Optimus Education were delighted to sponsor the Policy award.

One by one, school business managers took to the stage to collect their awards. Each winner was equally delighted and modest. Susannah Taylor, who won the policy award, said she was thrilled, but it was really an accolade for her whole team. 'To make an impact as a senior business manager you have to have the support and trust of your team,' she said.

'SBMs are outward looking; we are great at networking and collaborating and finding different ways of doing things to improve all aspects of school life including teaching and learning, but also back office functions – the whole lot.'

'Without the team at school and at home we'd be nothing,' Hazel Wale, SBM at Sir John Lawes school, said as she collected her award for strategy, efficiency and governance.

Each winner was adamant that they could not take all the glory; that any successes were due to a team effort. It's heartening to hear, especially given the fact this is not always the case and that many feel lonely and misunderstood. Hopefully, others will be inspired by these stories.

New professional standards

Looking back over the last year, Matthew Wheeler reminded us what an extraordinary time it has been for NASBM and the profession. 'At the start of the year, we stormed the barriers by taking school business management to the House of Lords,' he said. Of course, he was talking about the fantastic new NASBM professional standards, which Optimus Education are proud to be playing a part in and which involved so many people who responded to the NASBM consultation about what the standards should contain.

NASBM states that the standards have 'ringing endorsement' from the DfE, the EFA and sector stakeholders. NASBM also announced the creation of a new National School Business Management Qualifications Board to ensure that there are training and qualifications needed to support the profession as it continues to grow. Optimus Education are set to play a key part in this - so watch this space!

Too radical?

A key to the growing understanding and appreciation of the profession is that we are embracing new definitions,
rather than a one-size-fits-all term. The definition has been stretched and now starts with volunteers working part time in the school office and goes right to the top of the profession. Apparently, when Matthew put this scale to the House of Lords last year, he was laughed at for ‘being too radical’. And yet now it is becoming accepted.

‘By tunnelling under the walls of entrenched positions and practice, we have changed the profession forever,’ Matthew said passionately. It really was like listening to a presidential speech!

With new opportunity comes challenge and SBMs need to be aware of their new responsibility: if they are to play a part in leading their schools and shaping outcomes for children then they must have the courage to ‘face change and embrace a growth mindset’.

Many have been impressed by how SBMs have prepared for the increasingly academised landscape, by entering formal collaboration arrangements or getting CIPFA qualified, for example.

The close of Matthew’s speech was equally rousing. ‘What do we want? Safe, warm schools. When do we want them? Now! What do we want? New playgrounds. When do we want them? Now! What do we want? Teachers paid properly and on time. When do we want that? Now. What do we want? Exciting classrooms and places to learn. When do we want them? Now! ’

‘Do we want the headteacher taking time out to plan playgrounds or reconcile the payroll? No! Do we want the head of learning planning energy procurement across the trust? No! So what do we want? Better business management! When do we want it? Now!’

The audience particularly enjoyed his aside which provoked much laughter: ‘What do we want? Better bureaucracy? When do we want it? Now – said nobody ever!’

Collaboration

Matthew also reminded us how NASBM had ‘stepped onto the world stage’ when they signed an affiliation agreement with ASBO International (the Association of School Business Officials International – and nothing to do with antisocial behaviour). NASBM have been casting their net and are participating in school business management events in the US and Spain and working with SBM colleagues in Australia and South Africa. Similarly, Optimus are continuously keen to share best practice across the world: we have many international members and the recent COBIS conference held in the Netherlands was inspirational. It shows how many qualities of this profession are shared and found everywhere.

While Optimus and NASBM have embraced the power of global collaboration, so schools continue to join forces on a daily basis. It’s always important to shout about the quieter collaborations and victories closer to home: the school conversions, collaborations, promotions, refurbishments, qualifications and emotional support. As Matthew said: ‘We do our jobs with a calculator in one hand and packet of tissues in the other.’

Contentious

A contentious question that some have asked is whether you need to be an accountant to be a school business management professional. Matthew made a compelling case for why this is not the case: an accountant will not necessarily put the needs of the pupil at the heart of each financial decision.

‘This has been a great year for school business management. We have well and truly shattered the glass ceiling and become a proper profession. We have extended the definition of school business management to the very top of educational leadership and we have included entry-level practice properly.

‘As you go out from here to influence your schools and academy trusts, I urge you to reach for the top and to pursue your ambition and, as you do so, don’t forget to reach out and extend your hand to those who are still learning and to lift their practice as you go.’

The NASBM winners 2015

- Sandy Tomlinson from Vicarage Primary School for leadership of support services.
- Hazel Wale from Sir John Lawes School for strategy, efficiency and governance.
- Ian Kirkham from Wade Deacon High School for finance.
- Micon Metcalfe from Dunraven School for procurement.
- Tim Morton from the RSA Academy for infrastructure.
- Justin Smith from Wymondham College for marketing.
- Susanna Taylor from St Peter’s Church of England First School for policy.
- Sharon Carlyon from Laurence Haines Primary School for HR.
The SBM March checklist

A new month means a new set of challenges. Are you ready for the weeks ahead? ALEX MASTERS looks at what you need to do

Our monthly checklists are proving to be exceptionally popular. They are collated and amended daily by a team of practitioners and consultants to keep them as up-to-date as possible. We also include some relevant expert advice to guide you as you work through the checklist.

Maintained

SFVS: Complete section C (Value for money). Submit to LAs by the end of the month
The SFVS helps schools to manage their finances and to provide assurance to the local authority that they have secure financial management in place. The guidance applies to maintained schools and local authorities and is for: governing bodies of maintained schools, management committees of pupil referral units, local authorities and other interested parties. Local authority maintained schools are required to submit the SFVS annually to the authority.

We also have a range of advice on our site about how to achieve value for money across the school. Tips include: work with the SLT and be involved in all strategic planning for the years ahead – and if you aren’t on the leadership team, then arrange for regular spending review meetings with them. It’s also vital that your school governors understand the financial aspects of your school so make sure you attend full governing body meetings and run through the budget.

The Education Funding Agency
The EFA issues: pupil premium payment number 4, education services grant payment, 2016 to 2017 UIFSM conditions of grants and information about funding allocations for the next academic year. All information can be found on the EFA website. We also have a range of information, advice and templates on our site including how to evidence impact of the pupil premium. Just type ‘pupil premium’ in the search box.

Here’s a selection of some of the experts’ advice: ‘Remember that Ofsted want to see evidence that you are raising the attainment of your pupil premium pupils and closing the gap. It’s all about the data’ and: ‘You’ve got to have the courage of your convictions to spend the pupil premium money on what you believe is right and what you believe is needed for the individuals in your school.’

Also don’t forget...
Start end of year accounts and check Easter works are booked.

Academies

The Education Funding Agency
The EFA issues: pupil premium funding payments, indicative and following financial year grant payment 4, Primary PE and Sport Grant funding payment 2, financial funding allocations for the next academic year, Education Services Grant (ESG) funding, UIFSM conditions of grants, information about funding allocations for the next academic year, and pays Y7 catch-up premium for the current academic year. All information can be found on the EFA website. We also have a range of information and advice on our site including how to evidence impact of the pupil premium. Just type ‘pupil premium’ in the search box.

Also don’t forget...
Ensure accurate management accounts to the end of the month for Annual Accounts Return (AAR) later in the year.
Maintained and academies

For governors: give information to assist in their review of school insurance

We have a range of advice for school business managers on building effective working relationships with governors.

Here’s some expert advice: sometimes governors feel they need to have minute detail and be involved in day-to-day management, so it is important to set the parameters early; have a web page for governors and include them on your VLE so they can sign in and access all the information they may need in one easy-to-find place; send out and publish a full governors’ diary sheet, which has the dates for each committee meeting.

Budget monitoring

Have you considered devolving more responsibility to department heads when it comes to budgeting and purchasing? It’s a great way of saving you time and gives other staff members a responsibility for planning and budgeting effectively for their team. When budget planning, try to avoid using last year’s plan and just ‘adding inflation’. Start afresh and welcome new ideas from your team.

There’s a wealth of advice and templates on the Optimus Education website.

Here’s some of the expert advice: focus on procurement – develop expertise, plan ahead, work with your local authority to get a better deal, negotiate and read and understand the small print. Remember that every penny that comes through the door has to be linked to your school’s core purpose which is the teaching and learning, and the outcome of teaching and learning is the achievement of the pupils. Use the financial planning wheel below.

Financial planning wheel

1. Determine the current financial situation
2. Develop your financial goals
3. Identify alternative courses of action
4. Evaluate alternatives
5. Create and implement your financial action plan
6. Review and revise the financial plan

Staffing interviews begin

We have some brilliant interview advice on our site. Just log in and type ‘interview’ in the search box.

Here are some top tips from our experts: remember that interviews are not just about questions and answers but also exploring the candidate’s personality and how they would fit into your school – consider more general questions like: ‘tell me about yourself’ or ‘what is your communication style?’ Also, please remember: do not ask the candidate about their age, family situation, child-minding arrangements or ethnicity as this could be deemed discriminatory.

Contract monitoring

We have some fantastic content on contract negotiating and monitoring. Here is some expert advice: remember that any contract is a legally binding agreement between two parties and therefore any negotiations that are undertaken must be satisfactory to both and not be detrimental to the academy or school.

Do not enter any negotiations with a new provider until you have researched their background. And don’t forget to read the small print! A number of providers are now including a clause that one year’s notice must be given to end the contract. If this is ignored then they will renew the contract, without notification, for the original term length, which could be five years!

Also don’t forget…

Exam entries.

[Diagram of financial planning wheel]

Download the most up-to-date version of the March checklist from my.optimus-education.com/SBM
Pupil premium 2016-17: what you need to know

A new year means a new set of pupil premium funding. ALEX MASTERS outlines what conditions your school must meet to be able to receive this funding.

The following information has been collated from the Department for Education (DfE). It lays down the terms and conditions on which assistance is given in relation to the pupil premium grant (PPG) payable for the financial year beginning 1 April 2016.

The aim of the PPG is twofold: to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities to reach their potential and to support children and young people with parents in the regular armed forces.

The PPG per pupil for 2016-17 is:

- pupils in year groups reception to Year 6 recorded as Ever 6 FSM: £1,320
- pupils in years 7 to 11 recorded as Ever 6 FSM: £935
- looked-after children (LAC) defined in the Children Act 1989 as one who is in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, an English local authority: £1,900
- children who have ceased to be looked after by a local authority in England and Wales because of adoption, a special guardianship order, a child arrangements order or a residence order: £1,900
- service children, pupils in year groups reception to Year 11 recorded as Ever 6 service child or in receipt of a child pension from the Ministry of Defence will receive £300.

Ever 6 FSM

There is often some confusion about what the PPG means for pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). Here’s confirmation from the DfE: ‘The pupil premium for 2016 to 2017 will include pupils recorded in the January 2016 school census who are known to have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) since May 2010, as well as those first known to be eligible at January 2016.’

For the purposes of the grant conditions, ‘Ever 6 service child’ means a pupil recorded in the January 2016 school census who was eligible for the service child premium since the January 2011 census as well as those recorded as a service child for the first time on the January 2016 school census.

The PPG will also include those recorded in the January 2016 school census and alternative provision census who were looked after by an English or Welsh LA immediately before being adopted or who left LA care on a special guardianship order or child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order). These are collectively referred to as post-LAC in these conditions of grant.

Maintained schools converting to academies

Schools that are academies on 1 April 2016 will receive their PPG directly from the Education Funding Agency (EFA). Local authorities should pay PPG to schools due to convert to academy status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of conversion to academy</th>
<th>Proportion of PPG paid by LA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On or by 1 September 2016</td>
<td>5/12ths of their annual allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 1 September 2016 and on or by 1 January 2017</td>
<td>9/12ths of their annual allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 1 January 2017</td>
<td>Full allocation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Education Funding Agency

The EFA will adjust the local authority’s PPG allocation to reflect these conversions and the remaining allocation will be paid directly to the academy by the EFA. They will calculate the allocation using:

- the number of pupils recorded on the January 2016 school census who are Ever 6 FSM (not eligible for the LAC and post-LAC premium)
- post-LAC pupils
- Ever 6 Service child FTE pupils aged four and over in year groups reception to year 11.
How to spend the grant
The grant may be spent in the following ways:

- for the purposes of the school i.e. for the educational benefit of pupils registered at that school
- for the benefit of pupils registered at other maintained schools or academies
- on community facilities e.g. services whose provision furthers any charitable purpose for the benefit of pupils at the school or their families, or people who live or work in the locality in which the school is situated.

Please note: the grant does not have to be completely spent by schools in the financial year starting 1 April 2016; some or all of it may be carried forward to future financial years.

Allocations and payment arrangements
PPG allocations will be confirmed in June 2016 once pupil number data from the January 2016 census has been validated and agreed. PPG will be paid to LAs in quarterly instalments by:

- 30 June 2016
- 30 September 2016
- 30 December 2016

PPG will be paid to academies and free schools in quarterly instalments by the first working day of:

- July 2016
- October 2016
- January 2017
- April 2017.

Evidencing impact
A key challenge is how to evidence impact of the pupil premium to Ofsted. What are the best ways to show that you are truly succeeding in ‘closing the gap’?

Here are a few tips from the experts:

Remember that it’s all about the data - like in terms of raising attainment and challenge them!

You can look at:

- Progress: How have your pupils performed?
- Progress over time: How have you improved?
- Progress in comparison with others: How do your pupils compare to their peers?
- Progress in terms of outcomes: What is your pass rate?
- Progress in terms of attendance: Are your pupils attending regularly?
- Progress in terms of excluded pupils: Are you managing to reduce exclusions?
- Progress in terms of attainment: Are your pupils achieving the expected levels?
- Progress in terms of behaviour: Are your pupils exhibiting positive behaviour?
- Progress in terms of personal development: Are your pupils developing their social, emotional and mental health?
- Progress in terms of self-esteem: Are your pupils feeling good about themselves?
- Progress in terms of engagement: Are your pupils engaged in their learning?
- Progress in terms of relationships: Are your pupils developing positive relationships?
- Progress in terms of resilience: Are your pupils developing resilience?
- Progress in terms of wellbeing: Are your pupils developing positive wellbeing?
- Progress in terms of creativity: Are your pupils developing their creativity?
- Progress in terms of critical thinking: Are your pupils developing their critical thinking?
- Progress in terms of problem solving: Are your pupils developing their problem-solving skills?
- Progress in terms of decision-making: Are your pupils developing their decision-making skills?
- Progress in terms of communication: Are your pupils developing their communication skills?
- Progress in terms of team work: Are your pupils developing their team work?
- Progress in terms of leadership: Are your pupils developing their leadership skills?
- Progress in terms of self-awareness: Are your pupils developing their self-awareness?
- Progress in terms of self-management: Are your pupils developing their self-management skills?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
- Progress in terms of social awareness: Are your pupils developing their social awareness?
- Progress in terms of social skills: Are your pupils developing their social skills?
- Progress in terms of social influence: Are your pupils developing their social influence skills?
- Progress in terms of social responsibility: Are your pupils developing their social responsibility?
It's a key asset of being an Optimus Education member: you can contact us at any time with your burning question and we will put it to our team of experts and get back to you with an answer as soon as possible. Do check out some of the queries we answered recently – most likely they will be relevant to you and your team.

Financial benchmarking in schools: comparing performance

I'm looking for stats to present to governors and to use for my own monitoring of financial performance e.g. teaching cost per pupil and efficiency ratios to show effective use of the premises budgets.

I believe there are other standards academies are recommended to use to monitor how 'efficient' the 'business' is being managed. I wanted the same for a maintained school that I can benchmark against with other schools.

I use the SFVS as a self-assessment tool but I want something that gives me ratios for energy cost per child or percentage of budget used for teaching staff etc. Are there any KPI's that other schools use for day to day management?

Benchmarking information is available in a number of different places depending on the type of school. Academies can access the Academies Financial Benchmarking website and maintained schools the CFR website. It is possible to choose a benchmark set of schools and compare performance.

With regards to specific KPIs governors should consider these against the school's development priorities and the budget implications of not meeting them. Although related to academies, I find the auditor benchmarking reports incredibly helpful. They show some of the key ratios such as staffing costs and the breakdown of other expenditure. They also show pupil teacher ratios and the percentage of staff costs as a ratio of grant income and total costs.

In my school, we monitor the staffing ratio when the budget is set and last year the KPIs related to staff costs and energy costs, as these were particular areas of focus as we are expanding and were in new buildings. Controlling staffing costs in the current school funding climate is key. A 1% overspend here will be much more significant than in educational resources say and having a staff cost KPI keeps this important area in focus.

Answered by Micon Metcalfe - director of finance and business at Dunraven School

Additional payments to teachers for recruitment and retention

Can a school make 'additional payments' and/or 'recruitment and retention incentives' to teachers who are at the top of their pay ranges?

Schools that follow the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) can make additional payments to staff for recruitment and/or retention. Paragraph 27.1 of the STPCD states that the relevant body ‘may make such payments or provide such other financial assistance, support or benefits to a teacher as it considers to be necessary as an incentive for the recruitment of new teachers and the retention in their service of existing teachers.’

These benefits cannot be awarded to heads, deputies and assistant heads, save for relocation or housing costs. Relevant bodies must also ensure that they review any benefits awarded and are clear about the expected duration of such awards.

An academy that didn’t follow the STPCD would need to set out its approach in its salary policy but is free to set its own pay and conditions. All schools should outline their approach to recruitment and retention rewards in their salary policy and set appropriate limits.

Answered by Micon Metcalfe - director of finance and business at Dunraven School

Overseas school trips and hosting families: statutory guidance

Is Singleton 2009 still the guidance for families hosting pupils on overseas visits? Paragraph 6 in Annex C of the March 2015 edition of KCSiE refers to the
arrangements I am looking at, but that edition of KCSiE does not state that it replaces Singleton 2009. Singleton refers specifically to the reasons he made the ruling he did (in paragraphs 53 and 54 of Recommendation 7). It does seem that the recommendation to work with partner schools is in alignment with current practice.

The current statutory guidance setting out the requirements in this area is Keeping Children Safe in Education March 2015. Sir Roger Singleton’s report was not a guidance document – it was a set of recommendations made to the government of the day to inform them of what the statutory guidance should contain. This is an important distinction because schools have a duty to follow statutory guidance, whereas there is no such duty or expectation to have any regard for a recommendation report made to government.

In any event, the March 2015 guidance seeks to mirror Recommendation 7 by adding in the following sentence to paragraph 3 of Annex C which did not feature in the April 2014 version: ‘However, where the parents make the arrangements or take the responsibility for the selection of the host parents themselves, this will be a private matter between the child’s parents and the host parents and in these circumstances the school will not be the regulated activity provider.’

So to answer your question, you are right to say that KCS and Recommendation 7 are consistent and the correct guidance to follow is KCS March 2015.

Answered by Dai Durbridge – education lawyer

School staff pensions: a statutory requirement

Can a school withdraw the option for new joiners to join either the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS) and/or the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) without withdrawing from the scheme altogether and if so, how do they do this?

We are an academy and the question has been posed by the governors as a cost saving option. The governors want to know if they have to offer new joiners the option of joining the TPS and or LGPS or if they could offer them a basic level pension instead.

A school (including academies) cannot withdraw the option of either the Teachers’ Pension Scheme or the Local Government Pension Scheme. They are required to offer the relevant pension to all staff including new employees. Academies will have this clarified in their Funding Agreement.

Whilst theoretically it might save a school money, the pension is an important part of the remuneration and lobbying to have this restriction lifted would likely make the school a less attractive employer and could make recruitment much harder. The new rules around pension auto-enrolment mean that employers should not try to persuade employees to opt out of pensions either, nor accept an opt-out until the first day of service.

Answered by Micon Metcalfe - director of finance and business at Dunraven School

Staff leave of absence appeals

A teacher has been refused 5 days’ leave of absence in term time for a holiday. The teacher has appealed to the governing body against the decision. Should this be heard by a panel of governors or is it the headteacher’s decision?

There is no prescribed format for this. Some school policies would have the decision heard by the governing body, others by the headteacher. If your school does not have a policy for this then I would suggest that it is good practice to mirror your grievance procedure. If the grievance appeal goes to governors then it would be appropriate for the same to happen here.

Answered by Heather Mitchell - education lawyer

We take seriously our responsibility to provide this advice in good faith and to the best of our ability, and we will always do our utmost to live up to this responsibility. You should independently verify any information and content on this website before relying on it. Please see our full Terms and Conditions when using this service. For more information go to the Optimus Education website and click on the ‘Ask the Experts’ link in the school business management section.

Got a burning question to put to the experts? Go to my.optimus-education.com/ask-question
What’s in store for 2016? Expert predictions

A new year and new challenges. So what is in store for school business managers? We asked a range of experts to share their predictions.

MATTHEW WHEELER
NASBM head of professional standards

Our political masters have made it clear: not only are we supposed to do more with less, we are supposed to do it better. This means 2016 will be the year that SBMs come to love, or hate, the word efficiency. For some of us, it will be a year of playing a key role in the critical decisions schools and academies will have to take to balance their budgets. Others of us may find ourselves on the receiving end of a stern talking to about how our ‘inefficiency’ means pupils don’t make enough progress.

SBMs are going to be busier than ever; it looks like significant numbers of community schools will (be forced to) make the change to academy status while those already in academies wrestle with the structural changes needed to deliver ever better results with less cash in real terms. That can only mean one thing: cutting staff and denuding the curriculum.

By the end of the year, we may well all be ‘efficient’ but will any of us, staff or pupils, feel at ease with the clinical results-factories that we may create along the way?

NICKII MESSER
SBM consultant

I’m an unfailing optimist, especially where schools are concerned! The work that I do with SBMs, both as a consultant and trainer, means that I have the opportunity to be constantly amazed and impressed by their resilience, determination and ability to continually develop their skills to suit the occasion. With this in mind, I am delighted that the NASBM SBM Professional Standards describe SBM ‘behaviours’ which include, amongst others, ‘resilient’ and ‘change catalyst’.

Change catalyst! Not just change manager but able to ‘drive a culture that supports continuous improvement and innovation’. With budgets continuing to fall, DfE initiatives continuing to change direction, and Ofsted continuing to snap at our heels, school leaders will certainly need to be resilient, change catalysts if they are to retain and promote both impetus and appetite for success. So, my prediction for 2016 is that SBMs will toughen up their resolve and ensure that they build an effective, efficient and professional team around them ready for the challenges ahead.

RUSSELL DALTON
Finance and business director - Pershore High School

As we start a new year it is always good to take time to reflect on where we have moved on before considering the challenges that lie ahead. I can remember when ‘Every Child Mattered’, but really this was every child so long as they were in our school! Now through collaboration every child really does matter and standards do not stop at the school gates.

The last few years have seen the profession move dramatically forward and not a year goes by where I haven’t heard the comment: ‘There has never been a time where business managers have been needed more.’ I believe this year in particular we can say this. The introduction of the NASBM Professional Standards aligns us with our leadership teaching colleagues and allows the profession to grow and be focused more than it has ever done.

The ever increasing budgetary pressures on schools will fall mainly on the business managers to resolve and, with the expectations of continually improving pupil outcomes, the responsibility for funding all of the required resources will become all the more difficult. But we will do it! No one expects it to be easy, but in this new world of collaborative working our combined efforts will lead to success.

SUE BIRCHALL
SBM and associate trainer for NASBM

As we start 2016 it is clear that we are heading into a new era. The government drive to ensure that all schools form or become part of a MAT and their...
continued support for expansion of the free school programme looks set to develop the role of the SBM. Added to this the new NASBM standards for SBMs I think we can look forward to a year of dynamic change. This is a positive thing: we are still working within a blooming profession which I believe hasn’t quite found its feet yet. Change means that the education world can be constantly reminded of the value of SBMs in whichever guise they are employed. I see a year where the role diversifies to allow schools and academies to pick and choose which parts of the new standards fit their establishment and therefore the kinds of roles that they will offer. Either way, it allows the profession to have a positive impact within an environment of constant financial pressure, bring it on!

'Cate Hart
SBM consultant

The new SBM Professional Standards is a welcome and much needed publication produced by NASBM. The standards should be recognised by the senior staff and governors as your standards as a senior staff member in your school. They can be applied to all levels of SBM, and used as a tool for training and appraisal.

The skills required to manage and monitor multi-million pound budgets, ensure correct staffing levels and skills, administer public governance, manage buildings and resources will be tested to their extremes as funding is, in effect, cut.

Minimum funding per pupil remains at 2015 levels while staff costs increase. The consultation on the funding formula review could happen early in 2016, with a view to implementation in 2017.

Have your say. The role of the SBM is a challenging one and will become increasingly so, but satisfying and fulfilling too. Appointing new teachers is the latest critical issue, with reported amounts of £10,000 being charged by agencies, who increasingly don’t have suitable candidates. Investigate collaboration with neighbouring schools to save money and time. Make sure you use the help of Optimus Education and NASBM to keep up to date with rising issues and for policies and tips on how to handle these ever changing challenges.

'Laurie Perry
Director of support services - St Paul’s Catholic College

This is a challenging time for schools and academies. We face funding cuts, curriculum change, teacher shortages and the dismantling of previous means of support for schools via local authorities and the NCTL. This is linked with significant structural changes in the education system, including increasing numbers of academies, multi-academy trusts and free schools. We are moving towards a more school-led system, with the need for increasing collaboration and mutual support.

In this environment the role of the SBM has never been more important. Not just to provide effective leadership of support services, but also to contribute to the vision for the development of their school and the school system as a whole and, ultimately, to improve outcomes for all pupils.

It is therefore very timely that the new NASBM Professional Standards have been introduced. They provide a framework for personal and organisational development, and I hope will also contribute to a wider appreciation of the role of SBMs which is recognised through their rightful place on school leadership teams and through an appropriate pay structure. Some progress has been made on this, but there is more to do in 2016!

'Nazli Hussein
School business manager and founder of consultancy firm www.sbm-support.me

SBMs began evolving at a pace around 15 years ago when the role encompassed all the common operational aspects of a school. Responsibilities have become more complex and diverse, with career paths beginning to specialise in specific school business management areas. Deepening knowledge through qualifications is more essential and the range of CPD choices now on offer is much more extensive. The development of NASBM and introduction of professional standards for the role supports the fact the role is here to stay and this is further reinforced by a growing plethora of external organisations offering SBM support and services.

I think the role will need individuals to further develop leadership and management skills, to be more adept at influencing the wide range of stakeholders now involved in schools and become expert at getting more out of existing resources. This complements the fact there will be a major emphasis on SBMs becoming the strategic lead within the school for income generation, which may require traditional and digital marketing skills to be developed enabling SBMs to reach their target audiences successfully.'
While it’s always important to be up-to-date on legal changes and beneficial to have clear guidance, the DfE’s reports can seem overwhelming at times.

**Procurement:** the DfE has recently published some procurement training sessions for staff who are responsible for budgets and buying. Here are a few tips below.

- The cycle involves: specify (identify need and risks), tender (award contracts and negotiate terms), order, pay and manage (manage risks and measure performance).
- Determining the contract value determines the procedure. Contract value means the likely total calculated cost. Total contract value = annual value x period of contract (including extensions). E.g. a contract for three years at £40k plus an option to extend for another two years has a total value of £200k.
- When dealing with complex, large and long-term contracts, make sure you have an agreed method of handling change with clear differentiation between small scale change without financial implications and when changes need to be managed through formal change control channels.

**Efficiency:** this is set to be a buzzword this year as the economic climate places more pressure on schools to be as efficient as they can. The DfE has published tools, training and guidance to help you improve financial management and efficiency. The DfE issued some top tips below.

- Teaching costs account for almost half of a school’s spending, so it’s vital to maximise value for money. Areas to review might include: percentage contact time for teachers, pupil/teacher ratio and teacher/support staff ratio.
- When budget setting, don’t start with last year’s budget and ‘add a bit for inflation’. Start with a blank page, review pupil forecasts and consider a bidding process for resources.
- Other staffing considerations: skills swap with other schools, seek out governors with specific skills, share a skilled financial practitioner with other schools, and decide whether permanent or fixed-term contracts are more appropriate.
- Don’t sweat the small stuff! Remember that non-staff costs account for about a quarter of a school’s spend. Identify and make use of buying consortiums and don’t waste time on penny pinching.
- Salix provide loans for energy efficiency schemes which are approved by the government.

**Risk protection:** the DfE is proposing to make changes to the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) membership rules. They’re asking for your views on the proposals, key points of which we’ve summarised below.

- Reduce the RPA GAG deduction from £25 per pupil to £20 per pupil from September 2016. The DfE claims that this will leave academies with additional funds to spend.
- Academies will be required to provide a progress report to the RPA setting out their plan to implement both the risk improvement requirements and recommendations. See more about risk management in the Academies Financial Handbook.
- Set a time limit on reimbursing academies for long term insurance arrangements. The Education Funding Agency (EFA) will not meet further claims after 31 August 2017, three years from the start of the RPA.
- Reduce the period of notice which RPA members must give before leaving the RPA from six months to three months. The DfE believes this period reduction will still allow the EFA time to implement the relevant funding adjustments.
- Clarify the arrangements for multi-academy trusts to join the RPA where only some of their academies are able to join in the first instance. The DfE said it is happy for MATs to join in a phased manner where their other academies still have commercial insurance contracts in place, but only if they commit to their remaining academies becoming RPA members as soon as practically possible.

**Pupil premium:** the DfE recently published details on the pupil premium funding conditions of grant for the financial year 2016-17. For a detailed overview of this, turn back to page 26.
What’s in this month’s Teaching and Learning section?

It’s a varied one this issue! We cover a lot of ground, with articles relevant to classroom teachers, assessment leads, more able coordinators and leaders of teaching and learning. Struggling to track progress meaningfully in a world without assessment levels? Check out Stephen Tierney’s summary of the system his academy trust has developed: at its simplest, find out what pupils don’t know and teach them it. We’ve had a lot of interest in our mastery resources, so see some featured in this issue – login to the Optimus website for more. There’s also advice on the often difficult issue of using EAL pupils’ first language in the classroom, and the key priorities for the more able in 2016. Are you interested in how the brain works and what it means (or doesn’t) for education? Go to page 46 where we explore the state of the research from neuroscience and its relevance for teachers.

Contributors in this issue

Jo Facer is head of English at Michaela Community School. She is passionate about reading and getting her pupils to do the same. She blogs at Reading all the Books. @jo_facer

Owen Carter is content lead for teaching and learning at Optimus Education. Previously he worked at SAGE and Pearson Publishing, where he helped develop educational apps. @TeachingOE

Stephen Tierney is the executive director of the Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust. He works nationally as chair of the Heads’ Roundtable Group. @LeadingLearner

Diane Leedham is an education consultant, trainer and writer. She has worked as a teacher, head of English, whole school literacy lead, local authority advisor for English and more. @DiLeed

Top tweets from @TeachingOE

#ukedchat In centuries of debate, we haven’t found one clear purpose for education. Seems unlikely we will now. Maybe we need to accept that
We need a time-out on #growthmindset, says Dweck. ‘It was never just effort in the abstract’
Teachers, are you aware of this? A free way to access #research at participating libraries. http://www.accesstoresearch.org.uk/

Be part of the Optimus Teaching and Learning network

Live Chat
Can’t find what you’re looking for on optimus-education.com? Click on the Live Chat or Help button and connect with our customer services team.

Ask the Experts
Got a specific question? Get in touch with our expert panel by submitting your query via optimus-education.com/ask-question

Twitter
Want to get engaged in discussion and connect with your peers? Follow us on Twitter @TeachingOE

Download a digital version of your Optimus Education Insight magazine by logging into your My Account area on optimus-education.com
Mastery teaching: lesson planning in maths

How should you approach planning for mastery in maths? JULIA STEAD outlines the planning and assessment cycle you should implement.

The mastery approach to teaching is a hot topic at the moment across all age ranges in education.

It bills itself as a teaching method which allows all pupils to excel, and aims to give all pupils a thorough brick by brick solid wall of knowledge, which they can then apply to solve the huge range of connected mathematical problems they encounter at each stage of their learning.

How teachers plan for this style of maths curriculum poses questions. It can mean changing pedagogical style and re-thinking planning format and schemes of work. It will open up conversation and debate about how to start. For a school adopting a mastery approach, the canvas awaits.

The fundamentals

It’s worth understanding the main points, aims and rationale of a mastery curriculum. What are the non-negotiables?

Firstly, pupils are required to totally understand and master a topic before proceeding onto the next topic area. The decision to progress onto new learning content is based purely on security of knowledge and readiness.

If certain children understand a topic before others, they are challenged through depth of knowledge – differentiation is by rich, varied and sophisticated problems for higher achievers and immediate intervention and support for lower achievers.

Teachers must believe that all children are capable of achieving the desired level of knowledge. Expectations must be high. Teacher modelling is crucial for a mastery approach to work.

Curriculum matters as much as pedagogy in this approach. The curriculum has to be exceptionally detailed and structured. The pupils’ learning pathway is crafted with carefully sequenced stepping-stones through content.

In particular, we need to teach pupils complete structural knowledge of maths. This way, they can make connections in all areas of maths. Their sound knowledge allows them to recall facts from their long-term memory and manipulate them to work out other mathematical facts. Rapid recall of mathematical facts is key.

Technical proficiency in all areas of maths, and conceptual understanding are developed in parallel, due to pupils undertaking ‘intelligent practice’ – varied practice that really delves deep into the precise area of maths being taught. As 'Teachers must believe that all children are capable of achieving the desired level of knowledge',
teachers, we need to develop engaging and varied tasks to practise the maths being taught. This is where planning in teams can help – two (or ten!) heads are better than one.

**Build in assessment**
Assessment is a key and constant part of the mastery cycle. Precise questioning is used – constant assessment for learning (AFL). This identifies gaps in children’s knowledge, and teachers or support staff can intervene.

This immediate formative assessment leads to same day addressing of misconceptions for individuals or groups who have not understood the key teaching.

**What do I need?**
Resources include high quality textbooks and both concrete and pictorial representations of mathematical ideas and concepts, to go alongside formal and very precise teaching. This would create a large amount of work for teachers initially, but would be there for subsequent years.

As the list of non-negotiables above might indicate, high-quality training is also crucial: teachers need to feel secure enough in their own subject knowledge and teaching methods in order to deliver on the ambitious aims of a mastery approach.

**What does this mean for teaching and planning?**
Firstly, for maths teachers of all sorts, the new mastery style can be quite daunting. Seek support from maths coordinators, specialists or heads of departments if content accuracy is troubling you.

As a result of the Shanghai-England teacher exchange which took place in 2014-15, the NCETM (National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics) created their ‘Planning for Mastery’ documents, which give excellent guidance on questioning, and tasks that can develop mastery in the areas of maths dictated by the National Curriculum content of each year group. You can check these out online at http://bit.ly/1ZBnkQA.

**Handling underachievement**
In time, the mastery approach is designed to eliminate underachievement, as gaps are plugged immediately and everyone progresses through the material at the same pace. By taking longer over the early concepts, pupils are taught fundamental knowledge first, and it is the first to be retained – allowing them to build, however slowly, on that fundamental early knowledge.

There is no need for traditional ‘closing the gap’ maths interventions, as misconceptions are addressed immediately. This would be through supported ‘intelligent practice,’ smaller group teaching of the day’s mathematical content, one to one teaching, or detailed explanatory support.

Constant rigorous quantitative assessment, along with formative assessment for learning, stops any children from falling through the net unnoticed. Teachers can therefore have a pinpoint-sharp knowledge of where each child is at, at any given moment. How many times has your head teacher demanded that clear knowledge of your pupils from you?

---

**More resources**
- The NCETM briefing on mastery is well worth a read – available online at http://bit.ly/1OG2Fpk.
- Assess whether mastery learning fits your teaching methods at my.optimus-education.com/mastery-learning-right-your-school

---

www.optimus-education.com  OPTIMUS EDUCATION INSIGHT
There's been a lot of interest in the mastery approach to teaching and learning across all phases of the education system. I've already outlined how I use the mastery approach to planning in English (see http://bit.ly/1RR7WjX) but a common problem is dealing with pupils who, for whatever reason, are substantially behind where they should be.

About three weeks into the autumn term, I was given the lowest set of Year 11 pupils. There were fourteen students, four of dubious attendance (one as low as 30%), all far behind where you would hope a Year 11 class to be.

They were entered for iGCSE English Language and the Edexcel Certificate in English Literature. I could find less than one in three of their coursework pieces for the former.

They sat their mock exam at the end of that first week, and most scored a single mark out of a possible 50. A number copied the exam texts out word for word. I was in a pool of despair. These students weren't badly behaved. They were just incredibly far behind. It seemed to me from the way they had not engaged in the mock that they probably could not read the exam texts.

So what to do? Here I'll share the strategies I used and resources to support a mastery approach in English.

High-impact planning
At this late point in the year I had a couple of choices open to me for this class. I could either teach them to read, or I could drill them to an exam. After an anguished weekend, I came upon a solution that could enable me to do both.

Looking at the texts they needed to cover for English Literature, I created a knowledge organiser for each of the three texts: An Inspector Calls, Of Mice and Men and poetry. I specified in precise detail the key knowledge students would need: for the novel and play, I focused on plot, character, technique, quotation and context.

For poetry, I specified each poetic device with an example from the anthology, as well as naming the poets, poems and a one sentence summary of that poem. I also included the key themes.

I then counted the number of lessons remaining in the year before the pupils could potentially be sitting their exams. I worked out, of all the aspects pupils would have to learn, a sequence of when precisely I would set learning different parts of the map for homework, and which parts I would recap at the start of every lesson.

My next step was to give pupils a homework book, where I explained they were to write out the half of the grid they had covered up.

We did a whole lesson on learning how to cover half an organiser while writing the other half from memory, before meticulously checking their work with a green pen.

At the beginning, pupils would learn one part of the map over three or four nights, being tested on it at the beginning of every lesson that week. The more pupils learned and the more their memories were tested, the higher the scores they clocked up. This built their confidence quickly – students saw that if they did the learning, they would reap the results.
Lesson Planning and Delivery

Assessing understanding

Finally in these lessons we’ll read one to two sides of the handouts as a class, aloud, with me stopping periodically to ask questions to check students’ understanding.

After this, pupils answer five comprehension questions, with a sixth ‘stretch’ question if they complete these. While they write silently, I circulate with my red pen, marking as I go, but also looking for common misconceptions and errors, and deciding who I will call on to feedback their answers in order to highlight these. Pupils mark in a green pen as I take feedback, scribbling key misspelled words on the board.

Finally, and rarely if I’m honest as my class find the above takes an hour, pupils will write a paragraph independently. Following an observation, I was asked to add a paragraph scaffold to the slide: this was couched in the language of ‘I know Year 11 shouldn’t need it, but yours do, and too many find it too hard to start writing.’ I’m hopeful I will be able to take this away soon.

I’ve included here a sample handout on one of the poems in the syllabus, ‘Half-past Two’ by UA Fanthorpe, as well as a section of a knowledge organiser for the poetry paper.

You can download three example lessons and some more resources from the website at: my.optimus-education.com/node/15331

What is a knowledge organiser?

A knowledge organiser is a single page containing the key knowledge needed for a particular unit of work. In history this might contain important dates, one-line biographies of crucial figures, quotations and keywords. In science this might be the key equations to memorise, definitions of specific terms and fundamental theories or models.

I decided to base every lesson around reading. Early on, when we were reading *An Inspector Calls*, I led whole class reading, as a way of getting the most impact for these weaker pupils.

In these later lessons, the format is again centred around recall and reading. We begin the lesson with recall relevant to whatever topic we are looking at. Pupils are expected to answer these questions in full sentences, as, along with reading, they need to build their capacity for writing at length.

Pupils then have two or three ‘knowledge organiser recaps,’ where I blank out one side of the knowledge organiser and they write the other side in their books from memory. When revisiting a map we hadn’t looked at for some time, I would see how much pupils were struggling and give them a prompt word if needed.

---

Poetry GCSE: one section of a knowledge organiser

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>If</td>
<td>Rudyard Kipling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prayer Before Birth</td>
<td>Louis MacNeice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Half Past Two</td>
<td>U. A. Fanthorpe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td>D. H. Lawrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hide and Seek</td>
<td>Vernon Scannell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sonnet 116</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>La Belle Dame Sans Merci</td>
<td>John Keats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Poem at Thirty Nine</td>
<td>Alice Walker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Telephone Conversation</td>
<td>Wole Soyinka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Once Upon a Time</td>
<td>Gabriel Okara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>War Photographer</td>
<td>Carol Ann Duffy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Tyger</td>
<td>William Blake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>My Last Duchess</td>
<td>Robert Browning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Do not go gentle into that good night</td>
<td>Dylan Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>A Mother in a Refugee Camp</td>
<td>Chinua Achebe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Remember</td>
<td>Christina Rossetti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued >>
Half-past Two – U. A. Fanthorpe

Summary
A primary school child is made to stay behind after school, but his idea of time does not yet include numbers, only daily time ideas such as 'TVtime', so he therefore does not really understand when he can go home. There is a clear contrast in this event’s significance: whereas this punishment represents a big moment in the boy's life, his teacher has forgotten about it and when she sees him waiting in the classroom for her, sends him home in an instant.

Structure and Form
An eleven stanza, free verse poem of equal line length written in the third (and occasionally first) person. These small three-lined ‘chunks’ of narrative, aided by enjambment, resemble the small boy's tendency to compartmentalise his day into time periods, as mirrored in Fanthorpe's presentation of his words, which lack spaces.

Language/Comments
The fairy-tale opening ‘Once upon a’ builds our expectations of a story and links perfectly to a child's experience at primary school, delivered in a child-like tone. This is one technique Fanthorpe uses (and later we find echoes of in the poem) to encourage us to identify with the boy's experiences and see the world through his eyes.

The points of view and voices of different characters are shown through language. Capital letters differentiate the teacher's voice 'Very Wrong' and the drawn-out emphasis she places on these words, to the extent that they are magnified in the boy's mind as having a great importance. Ironically the awfulness of the 'offence' is immediately undermined and trivialised by the narrator in line three ('I forget what it was'), whose own voice is distinguished by brackets.

Fanthorpe's language choices match the vocabulary stereotypically heard in primary schools ('cross…wicked') and help locate our imaginations within that setting. The lack of spaces in the boy's language 'Gettinguptime' communicate his interpretation of their visual representation, as this is exactly how he hears these words spoken. To a small boy these are indeed ‘important times’ since they dictate his daily life – he has as yet no understanding of numeric time.

The theme of childhood innocence is strongest here, but we are not encouraged to laugh at him, only understand his situation and understand how small matters can adopt a huge importance for a child.

Stanza six is a move away from conversational to more poetic language, with the use of personification ‘little eyes…two long legs’ and the onomatopoeia ‘click’. Yet despite the elevated mood of this verse, the language still remains child-like in tone, as the vocabulary shows a teaching method often used to tell the time. Enjambment carries the element of fantasy introduced here into the next two verses, as if we too are soaring with his imagination ‘onceupona…timefor…escaped’. The pattern of four repetitions of ‘into’ appeals to our senses of smell, sound (with the oxymoron ‘silent noise’) and touch, keeping the dream-like quality already introduced, as if he himself is daydreaming.

Italics express the teacher's direct speech and express how trivial the matter was for her too, like the narrator earlier. Notice she speedily releases him from his prolonged waiting in only two sentences, as if his ‘detention’ was really of little importance to her. Fanthorpe attempts to show his teacher in an unfavourable light as she describes her as ‘scuttling in’, just like a small animal. The teacher has also stayed nameless and is depersonalised throughout the poem, often referred to as ‘She…Her’. The poet therefore possibly uses her as an example to criticise adults who are dismissive of children in this manner, reinforced by the casual way ‘she slotted him back’.

The nostalgic quality at the end of the poem (‘he never forgot’) shows a refreshing feeling of freedom, a temporary world lacking time restrictions, with the lovely fantasy image of a ‘clockless land’ and the personification of the final line ‘Where time hides tick-less waiting to be born’. Living in a modern world of schedules and appointments, we too can empathise with this happy state once in a while.
Using data to inform teaching and learning

In a world without levels, monitoring pupil progress to inform teaching is not easy. **STEPHEN TIERNEY** outlines the approach his trust has taken

**The world of** assessment, particularly as it relates to data, is changing at pace in our post-levels existence. Rethinking our assessment processes has been our main focus this year, and now we’re starting to see the impact. In a nutshell: we find out what pupils don’t know and teach it to them.

The actual process starts with collaborative planning of schemes of learning including the writing of common and cumulative interim assessments. The assessments form part of a range of sources which set the standard of challenge required. In some subjects the assessment pretty much sets the standard required but other subjects, like art, benefit greatly from exemplars.

**Embedding the system**

A new style of meeting was introduced for the 2015/16 academic year. Core subjects have 4-6 data meetings per year whilst other foundation subjects have 2-3. A meeting occurs after each pre-planned, common and cumulative interim assessment. The purpose of the meeting is to identify:

- aspects of the curriculum which are particularly well taught or in need of development within schemes of learning or by individual teachers. What is the data telling us?
- what aspects of the previously taught curriculum need to be retaught to a whole class or which elements should be revisited with individuals
- specific interventions needed beyond the classroom where a pupil is not making the required progress (we aim to decrease these over time).

The class teacher will lead on a discussion, for his/her class, of which aspects of the data suggest pupils show limited knowledge, skill or understanding and how this will be addressed in the next lesson(s). This will include a review of performance by prior attainment group (high, middle and lower) and of the pupils eligible for pupil premium funding.

Team leaders look to identify any “outlier” teachers who teach an aspect of the curriculum particularly well and ask them to lead departmental professional development on this aspect. The scheme of learning is revised accordingly to ensure future teaching has greater impact on learning.

Different thinking and practice comes when you see targets and the flight path as the expected learning defined within the curriculum, rather than data based targets, and subject-based granular assessment as your monitoring and tracking tool.

This learning “flight path” must give pupils the opportunity to make great progress from their starting point to the end of the key stage. This means that the schemes of learning need to teach the factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive knowledge pupils will need to acquire to achieve highly. The expected learning needs to be defined in a manner that will allow teachers to assess it accurately, identify what is and isn’t known by the pupil and then respond to these gaps in learning.

Leaders need to hold their nerve and trust in a target setting system based on granular subject based learning targets. It’s a different way of working that takes some getting used to. It is very easy to panic when reams of aggregated data aren’t flowing across your desk. Monitoring is still important but becomes granular rather than aggregated, showing the actual knowledge being acquired and what is yet to learn.

Parents can be engaged through reports that have a simple progress measure, the learning that needs to be targeted and a signpost to work the pupil could do to achieve it. We’ve gone for four levels of progress – Red, Amber, Green and Gold – as determined by the interim summative assessments which are common for pupils following a particular scheme of learning.

Setting targets is now a more complex business. Value added measures are based on the progress made by a pupil between two assessment points compared to the average progress made by all pupils with the same prior attainment. A pupil making more progress than average has a positive outcome and one who makes less progress a negative one. The key is to understand that the “expected statistical progress” is a mean: many pupils with the same prior attainment will make more progress than this. We are going to use the expected level of progress as the minimum of a target range rather than setting a single target grade. The pupil needs to understand that how hard s/he works will have a major impact on the eventual grade achieved.
When supporting pupils with English as an additional language we often neglect fluency in their home language. **DIANE LEEDHAM** explains the why and how of using first language with EAL pupils

**In our anxiety** to ensure that English as an additional language (EAL) learners develop academic English as quickly as possible, we sometimes forget to focus on pupils’ first language skills. Even EAL as a term tends to identify a language gap rather than existing language repertoires.

Many EAL learners in UK schools are multilingual with three or more languages at their command so any ‘natural wastage’ is a terrible personal and community loss.

**Myth busting**

It’s a myth that a cold turkey approach which restricts use of first language leads to accelerated fluency in English.

Language and literacy in first language supports language and literacy development in a second, through what is known as common underlying language proficiency (CALP).

Children who develop bilingually can make comparative connections between language structures and systems as well as cultural knowledge. If we want classrooms to be metacognitively aware of language use then our EAL learners are some of the best resources we have to achieve this.

It is in everyone’s best interests to support EAL learners to sustain fluency and gain qualifications in all their languages and emerge from school as fully bilingual.

NALDIC provides useful summaries of both theory and research into the advantages of bilingualism. (See [www.naldic.org.uk](http://www.naldic.org.uk) for lots of useful links).

An excellent source of further reading is available via the EAL Mesh Guide, which summarises much of the research into the different aspects of teaching EAL learners – see [www.meshguides.org/guides/node/112](http://www.meshguides.org/guides/node/112).

**Different bilingual learners**

EAL learners are not homogenous so teachers need to know the individual language profiles of children in their classes. There are many templates and questionnaires available to help.

The crucial information to elicit is the pupil’s fluency in any other languages, including the different contexts the languages are used in. Bear in mind some spoken languages do not have a written form and multilingual children may not have age appropriate fluency in every language.

Monolingual English speakers use varieties of English according to context and purpose so this kind of language investigation is very adaptable to whole class use. The discussion arising from the language profiles supports all pupils’ metacognition in the importance of making language choices appropriate to context.

**Use of first language is a whole-school conversation**

Schools need to make sure that their values and vision for multilingualism and first language use are research informed and consistent. Welcome posters are not enough to convey that first language is valued in the curriculum. Any negative attitudes and anxieties about use of first language within the school community need to be discussed and resolved.
An evaluative walk around school while lessons are in progress will help establish what messages about multilingualism are conveyed by displays and classroom practices.

As well as displays and the school environment, curriculum planning should factor in a spectrum of possibilities for first language use in mainstream lessons. Of course there are times when an instruction for English-only is appropriate.

Support pupils pre-, post- and during the lesson

Give relevant resources to EAL learners in advance of the lesson and help them consolidate new learning afterwards with annotated resources and worksheets – or even sound, enabled via QR codes.

You can use Google Translate to help but be cautious if you do not have a fluent native speaker to check. For example, the word for ‘cell’ in Polish intended for a biology lesson may be linked with prison rather than science!

If an EAL learner is literate in first language and has some prior knowledge of the topic, then encourage them to write in first language prior to scaffolding into the English. This works best when the pupil’s prior learning helps them understand the topic beyond their capacity to express in English.

Same language EAL learners may benefit from being able to move between languages in classroom talk at different stages of the lesson. Of course this should be managed systematically and the ‘rules of engagement’ made explicit as they would be for any classroom talk.

The most effective EAL groupings provide access to fluent English speakers along with talk frames and prompts in English.

Encourage explicit conversations about language

The whole class benefits from explicit conversations about language and the way different languages work.

Bilingual children are constantly making implicit cognitive choices across their linguistic repertoire but these choices often remain uninterrogated unless the teacher encourages and supports explicit discussion.

The metacognition involved in ‘that’s how we say it’ discussions supports sophisticated knowledge about language which benefit everyone. EAL learners may be reticent unless the school environment clearly signals that first language is valued, particularly if they are in a minority in the room.

Encourage mixed pupil partners to translate and transcribe across languages to prompt analytical discussion about phonic correspondences, spelling, semantics and etymology.

Mary Maybank, an EAL consultant in Walsall, encouraged this sort of rich discussion by prompting pupils to create performance poems. Each verse of the poems started with a line in Urdu, accompanied by an image: pupils then created the further three lines in English to complete the verse. This could easily be adapted for different age groups, languages and literature sources.

Promote multilingualism in the school community

Positive attitudes to global languages and those speaking them play an important part in social cohesion and world citizenship.

Multilingual schools with a variety of resident ‘experts’ in their classrooms and communities are particularly fortunate but there are plenty of ways that monolingual Anglophone schools can share the benefits and participate (to see this in action, check out how Jack Hunt School promote an inclusive environment at my.optimus-education.com/node/10121)

Explore opportunities for creative projects and partnerships

Where access or funding is not available for pre-existing projects, many of the schemes below offer free resources and ideas for bespoke adaptations.

- Goldsmiths multilingual creativity project focuses on using creative works in the teaching of community languages. Their website offers free presentations and recommended reading for those interested in pursuing work in this area.
- The multilingual creativity hub at: www.multilingualcreativity.org.uk has lots of collected resources focusing on bilingual creativity – well worth checking out.

To access all the related downloadable resources, view this article online at my.optimus-education.com/node/15361.
Supporting new teachers to develop their craft

The first years of teaching should help you develop into a confident classroom practitioner. KATIE RENTON looks at how new teachers can be supported to achieve their goals

Every teacher probably has a different idea of what they most want to achieve in their role as an educator. To be an inspiration to their pupils, to achieve the best results, to encourage pupils to be passionate about their subject… all of these and many more could be the original triggers for classroom teachers that propelled them into their teaching career.

However, all of these goals are part of a much larger responsibility that our classroom teachers uphold. Last year, the Guardian ran an article which asked a 16-year-old pupil to summarise what they would characterise as the ‘perfect teacher’. The list included showing a deep understanding of their pupils, not shouting, showing their personality and remembering that pupils appreciate them.

There is no doubt that great learning requires great teaching. Discussing what makes a perfect teacher will always be subjective, but there is one thing we know for sure: great teaching requires continuous development and improvement. Teachers must strive to develop their core skills as a classroom practitioner, particularly in the early stages of their career.

Supporting the new practitioners

For new teachers (and for this I mean teachers up to 3 years qualified), the importance of striking this balance of personal achievement and career development is crucial. The first few years can be hugely overwhelming – potentially hundreds of new pupils, masses of new administrative responsibilities and being the new fish in the established pond.

In writing about the essential skills for new teachers, H. Jerome Freiberg noted that the necessary repertoire of teaching strategies were largely developed through trial and error, stating that a haphazard process ‘may take several years – by which time many struggling, unprepared new teachers have already left the classroom.’ Taking on new challenges as a teacher is certainly part of the remit, but the fact of the matter is that those new to the profession must be supported in making their initial steps to success in the classroom.

Teacher Development Programme

In his Pragmatic Education blog, Joe Kirby made a number of interesting points about the nature of professional development in schools. The list that struck me the most was that of the key features of effective CPD:
- targeted
- evidence-based
- collaborative
- sustained
- evaluated.

Never is this more relevant than when we are discussing the development of newer teachers. Our Teacher Development Programme (TDP) was created with two things in mind – to adhere to these key features of effective CPD, and to support newer classroom practitioners in developing their core skills in the most engaging and sustained structure possible.

The task of being a new teacher can be enough to exhaust the most alert of people: for this reason, training opportunities should be manageable in size and clear in their intentions. The seven units in the TDP need not be delivered in sequence and take up the already stretched time of new practitioners.

In addition to this, each unit comes equipped with self-evaluative resources for teachers to take away, and a list of recommended reading which allows them to deepen their learning of the concepts.

Ultimately, the goal of the TDP is to support both your school and your teachers to achieve the level of great teaching that pupils deserve. If pupils want their teachers to show their personality and passion for their subject, then new teachers must be supported to gain the confidence in their core teaching skills which allow them to inspire and engage better than ever.

Access the Teacher Development Programme at: my.optimus-education.com/training/teacher-development-programme. Premium and Unlimited members can access it free of charge.
Gifted and talented planning priorities

The disadvantage gap, transition and tackling behaviour – find out TORSTEN PAYNE’S top priorities for the more able and get advice on how to plan for high achievers

**Most able pupils** in non-selective schools are still not being challenged enough, said Ofsted in their 2015 report ‘The most able students: an update on progress since June 2013’.

While you might challenge some of the conclusions it nevertheless shows that provision for the most able remains vital for schools that wish to be rated good or outstanding.

Here I’ll describe some common issues with practical strategies to address them – consider if your school shares any of these traits and adapt the ideas correspondingly.

1. **The size of the more able cohort**

   More able pupils do better (compared to their individual targets) when there is a higher proportion of them among the pupil cohort. If you’re a school with a high or low number of high prior attainers, this is something to think about.

   Obviously there is little that schools can do to quickly change the average academic abilities of their intake. Generic gifted and talented clubs can actually discourage achievement: a young boy who is an able mathematician is unlikely to have much in common with an older girl who is a talented gymnast.

   If you keep your G&T register subject specific, though, this allows recognition of academic peers within the classroom and could be used to inform seating plans or pedagogy.

2. **Disadvantaged pupils**

   We hear a lot about narrowing the gap. This issue is even more pronounced for more able pupils: those who receive the pupil premium typically underachieve compared to their non-PP peers. Two factors are identified as being particularly relevant here.

   **High aspirations.** This involves instilling the belief in the pupils (and sometimes their parents or guardians as well) that they are capable of the best outcomes. This could involve:

   - work on mindsets
   - sending letters home to inform parents of their child’s nomination to the G&T register
   - setting demanding curriculum content
   - good careers education from an early age.

3. **The gender gap**

   No surprise here but the national picture continues to show that girls achieve better results (against personalised targets) than boys. This is just as true of the more able pupils. Strategies that some schools have used to counter this are:

   - single sex classes or single sex revision sessions
   - boy/girl seating plans
   - an emphasis on mixed pair work and study partners
   - all the normal interventions for any pupil falling below their target grades.

4. **Low level disruption**

   Though not specifically a G&T issue, the report does state that low level disruption too often interferes with the pace and detracts from the challenge of lessons.

   If you think this applies to your school I’d recommend Charlie Taylor’s ‘Getting the simple things right’ as the best summary I’ve read of behaviour strategies. You can also consult our behaviour and safety pre-Ofsted checklist – check this out at my.optimus-education.com/node/13775

**Clarify your responsibilities**

Remember that if you have responsibilities for G&T pupils, an inspection does not rest solely on your shoulders. It is a whole school duty to provide the best possible education for each child and the main themes identified by Ofsted also involve those with responsibility for transition, pupil premium and careers guidance.

Your job is to ascertain which of these themes are relevant for your school, make sure that the relevant staff are aware of these and ensure that a plan is in place to close the gap.
Neuroscience: what can teachers learn?

A lot of claims are made about the importance of neuroscience to teachers. OWEN CARTER summarises what you can and can't learn from the research so far

Interest from teachers in information about the brain is probably at an all-time high. But neuroscience is still very much an emerging field. Even researchers in this field happily admit that our understanding of how the brain works is very limited. In some ways it's research from cognitive psychology that can give more readily applicable insights.

There have, though, been a few large-scale projects which can help our understanding of the brain in meaningful ways. Here we'll cover some of the most important findings that can inform teaching.

Understanding the brain

The building block of the brain is the neuron. There are about 100 billion of these in a fully developed adult brain.

Every neuron consists of a cell body, which connects to dendrites and an axon. It looks a bit like this (diagram from 'Neuroscience and Education: Issues and Opportunities'; TLRP-ESRC).

When the terminals at the end of the axon connect to the dendrites of other neurons this creates connections known as synapses. It's through this connecting of neurons that complex neural creations like our brains are formed.

Within this connection, electrical signals travel through an individual neuron and cross that synapse to other neurons, being communicated as a chemical signal as they cross the synapse. This process of connection and communication allows neurons to communicate with each other and for sophisticated thought patterns to be formed.

The brain as a whole can be broadly divided into left and right hemispheres, with four main lobes across the brain. Each has been associated with different functions – the occipital lobe at the back of the brain, for instance, controls many aspects of vision.

In reality, though, the brain cannot be neatly divided up into pieces that work individually on certain tasks. Any task is likely to involve substantial neural networks across different hemispheres and lobes. This is why it is inaccurate and misleading to categorise people as ‘right-brain’ or ‘left-brain’ thinkers – in reality, no such distinction exists.

What is important for teachers to know is that ‘neurons that fire together wire together’. In short neurons that are repeatedly used grow stronger, and those that are used together frequently develop more powerful connections.

This understanding helps underline the importance of repeated practice for learning: if you don’t use a neural pathway, it can literally fade away. If you do use it, it becomes stronger. It may also hint at why new ideas are learned better when presented with reference to previous knowledge: it gives us something to build from.

With this basic understanding in place, what are some of the most important findings for teachers from neuroscientific research so far?

Brain development doesn’t fall neatly into phases

The Teaching and Learning Research Programme found that what we previously considered critical periods in child development ‘should be referred to as sensitive periods.’

The work of Sarah-Jayne Blakemore in particular has uncovered the substantial changes in brain structure and function that continue well into puberty – and even later adult life.
This idea that the brain can change throughout life depending on the inputs it receives is known as neuroplasticity, and has been a dominant feature of recent neuroscientific research. So:

- changes in the brain are particularly pronounced in early childhood and puberty, but are not confined to these periods
- these adaptations are most radical in early life, but the brain remains capable of being formed in new ways in adulthood. See Woollett, Spiers and Maguire's research on London taxi drivers, which found that they had unusually large hippocampuses, a part of the brain highly involved with memory and navigation, but that these shrank when the drivers retired and stopped needing to navigate.

**Educating adolescents is tricky**
The research of Blakemore has also highlighted the extent to which adolescents' brains are very different from adults. Indeed, Blakemore has argued that the reorganisation of the brain that occurs during puberty bears comparison with growth in the earliest years of life. It appears that in some areas performance actually dips during early puberty.

If you work in the later part of primary school, or the earlier part of secondary, you'll likely be educating children undergoing some of these changes. Here are some of the key points to bear in mind.

- Adolescents need more sleep, and at different times. They are biologically programmed to rise a bit later and sleep longer. Coupled with the ever-present smartphone and the distractions it presents, a lot of those at this age are effectively sleep-deprived almost all the time. Consider educating them about how to get better sleep, and recommend leaving devices aside an hour before bedtime.

- Certain parts of the brain change more than others during adolescence. According to the Royal Society report 'Neuroscience: implications for education and lifelong learning', the 'areas of the brain undergoing most change control skills and abilities such as self-awareness, internal control, perspective taking and responses to emotions such as guilt and embarrassment'. We should be conscious that pupils misread facial expressions and social situations, leading them to respond inappropriately. Be as clear as possible in your communication, and don't assume all pupils will pick up on non-verbal cues in order to avoid this.

- During this pruning stage in the brain, many connections are being cut and formed. If we want information to remain, we need to make it meaningful to students. Adolescents often question 'Why are we learning about this?' Express passion and use emotion appropriately in order to bring pupils on board.

**Don’t accept the neuromyths**
Unfortunately much writing about neuroscience has either presented an inaccurate view of the science, or claimed relevance to education that doesn't yet exist.

Be on your guard with this list of common neuromyths to watch out for.

**Some pupils think more with the left or right side of their brain, and we should alter teaching accordingly.**
While different hemispheres of the brain are associated with different function, they are also deeply interconnected. There's no substantial evidence to suggest educational benefits for addressing one side of the brain over the other.

**Some pupils are kinaesthetic learners, some visual and some auditory; we should present teaching to cater to that.**
Although some pupils may be better at dealing with kinaesthetic tasks and others better with visual tasks, this doesn't mean they learn better through these media. There's no real evidence to suggest that teaching pupils in their preferred style leads to better performance.

**Ability is innate: some pupils will just never do as well as others.** Though learning ability is shaped through genetic influence, it is far from being the only factor. Genetic predisposition is altered and influenced by the environment at every point. Genes can be turned on and off through inputs such as social interaction, diet and many other factors. Neuroscience is far from saying that our abilities are solely biologically determined.

**We only use 10% of our brains.** This claim has spread widely, being accepted across a wide range of fields. From an evolutionary point of view this would be hugely wasteful. In fact, the evidence suggests we use 100% of our brain – there isn't untapped power waiting to be discovered.

**Neuroscience doesn’t dictate teaching practice**
We might be premature in saying that neuroscience can tell us lots about teaching.

One problem is that neuroscience is still an emerging discipline. The body of knowledge is not as developed as in other disciplines. And because it monitors brain activity rather than actual evidence of learning (which is impossible to see) it's best to treat claims about how neuroscience should inform teaching with a critical mind. Your professional judgement about what works for your pupils should come first.

The other problem is that neuroscience is often used as a catch-all term for research into learning, when it is not. We know from cognitive science about the importance of things like retrieval practice, interleaving and the expertise reversal effect. When learning research gives us information, we don't necessarily need to bring neuroscience into it.
There cannot be many teachers who have not had the experience of teaching an apparently successful lesson, only to realise on marking pupils’ work that the learning point was largely missed by pupils and only a fraction of the intended learning has actually taken place.

On the face of it imparting knowledge to our pupils seems to an outsider to be such a simple affair. Yet frequently the rich, multi-dimensional mental image that we hold in our own minds transfers poorly to learners.

Our minds initially build only shallow, concrete understanding

In his article ‘Inflexible Knowledge: The First Step to Expertise’, Daniel Willingham explains that ‘Cognitive science has shown us that when new material is first learned, the mind is biased to remember things in concrete forms that are difficult to apply to new situations.’

As much as we try to transmit a full understanding to our pupils, it’s very difficult for most learners to swallow a whole theoretical framework in one go. This does not mean they have not been listening or are not thinking, it’s just that forming the neural structure that constitutes a full understanding of a rich concept takes a considerable amount of mental work over a period of time: work that has to be done by the learner herself and not by the teacher.

Information is stored as meaning

Unfortunately for teachers the amount of meaning we can communicate is limited by the amount of knowledge pupils already have of the subject in hand.

What appears to be rich in meaning to a mind which has other pieces of knowledge to connect the information to is likely to have shallow meaning in a mind which lacks meaningful information in the long term memory to connect it with. There’s a Matthew effect here: those rich in knowledge of a domain will find it easier and easier to add additional knowledge and understanding which in turn makes it easier to add yet more. Experts learn in a different way to novices.

Memory and understanding unavoidably requires thought

We need effortful thinking in order for new information to be laid down in our brains and connected with existing knowledge; when taught information is first received by pupils it lacks both meaning and longevity because it has not yet been thought.

Mental schema consisting of rich neural networks strengthened by repeated use give new learning deeper meaning and allow it to be retained for the long term. Willingham puts this simply but memorably in Why Don’t Students Like School?: ‘memory is the residue of thought’.

Learning requires overlaying layers of understanding over existing memories so it can’t be transferred directly, no matter how good the explanation. Instead we have to gradually build our neural architecture through effortful engagement: thinking carefully about the problems and ideas we are tackling, memorising the fundamental knowledge and weaving it all together.

Our evolutionary origins mean that we are not designed to abstract the meaning from our experiences at first: that’s too expensive on mental resources and too slow. Most of the time a rough and ready heuristic approach is sufficient for us to make a quick judgement and move on safely to survive and reproduce. (See Thinking, Fast and Slow for more on this).

Teachers can underestimate how hard a topic is for novices

A useful way for teachers to understand the evolutionary limitations of our brains is cognitive load theory. We know that the short term (working) memory has a very small capacity: at best seven pieces of information can be held in our working memory but for practical purposes the capacity is much less.

The teacher who is trying to teach the concept gets around this low capacity in their own brains easily by using understanding which is already encoded in their long term memory. The problem is that the teacher is frequently unaware of
How can teachers improve the effectiveness of knowledge transfer?

Our aim is to install deep, long-lasting knowledge in pupils’ brains. If the tendency for novices is to take on shallow knowledge the teacher’s task is to find ways to get pupils to chew over the knowledge so that it makes sense and embeds permanently. Here are some approaches that might help.

1. Comparison. Give pupils some similar but subtly contrasting scenarios and ask them to compare.
   a. In a lesson on medieval castles show pupils photographs or models of different types of castle and ask them to identify the similarities and the differences and try to account for why they might have occurred. Don’t spend their time making models of castles because that will lead to them thinking about model making rather than castle design.
   b. After teaching several mechanical approaches to solving quadratic equations encourage pupils to compare them and to identify which equations from a list might be best solved with each method. Don’t continue with mechanical practice once the basics have been understood, but get pupils to make choices about which technique to apply, and how to adapt the examples given to subtly different situations.
   c. In a business studies lesson give examples of how different companies have applied a similar marketing strategy but with different outcomes: what were the differences that made it work sometimes but not others?

2. Make the implicit practice of experts explicit. Encourage pupils to think in deep structures by framing questions which prompt useful habits and draw out deeper meaning.
   a. Bridging. Ask where they have seen analogous ideas before in a different context, if necessary prompting by citing an area of knowledge: ‘what character in Hamlet serves the same dramatic purpose as this one?’ This metacognitive process allows new learning to piggy-back on existing long-term knowledge so that existing neural structures are reinforced and given additional purpose.
   b. Encourage different ways of looking at a problem or issue, e.g. visual and verbal. ‘Can you sketch what this problem looks like?’. ‘What sort of graph would a function like this have?’. ‘Write 2 sentences which describe what this picture shows about the striking miners – from the politician’s point of view and the union leader’s point of view’.
   c. Use a variety of questioning, both checking superficial understanding and promoting deeper thinking. Check that pupils have taken on the shallow but salient facts, and also ask questions which engage the “slow” part of the brain by requiring the use of existing deep learning in a new situation. ‘What is similar between the two scenarios? Can you come up with a third scenario with a different context but the same structure?’

3. Beware of attention grabbing hooks that distract from the deeper meaning of the lesson: the energy and focus of enthused pupils, and all your painstaking preparation, are wasted if pupils are not actually thinking about the matter in hand for most of the lesson.

4. Do not be afraid to give very clear step-by-step structures at first that significantly reduce the number of ways pupils can get it wrong; early success with shallow tasks prompts a positive mindset that enables pupils to persevere with the harder work of resolving the shallow learning into deep understanding.

5. The use of mnemonics or other memory strategies, where appropriate, can make it easier for pupils to build reference points into their memories. These factoids are meaningless on their own but can be a useful piece of scaffolding to reduce cognitive load while understanding is being built.

6. Invite pupils to test out their new learning in questioning and informal quizzing tests: the early feedback about whether the concept has transferred successfully is valuable not just to the teacher but to the pupil. Getting it wrong is useful here: early detection of error puts us on the right track before a flawed understanding becomes permanent.

7. As time goes on remove the supporting structures, set problems and exercises with bigger gaps for pupils to bridge and more opportunities for useful errors. Give further examples and questions where the connection with the key ideas is less obvious.

8. Tell it as a story: we are naturally adapted to look for meaning and learning from stories.

Final thoughts

Above all, don’t be surprised and don’t worry if the rich learning that you transmitted is not fully received by pupils. Shallow learning is the essential start of the learning process and only continued thought around topics is going to yield the end goal of deep and permanent learning.
12 tips for staff wellbeing

Study after study tells us that teacher wellbeing is in danger of hitting rock bottom. **ELIZABETH HOLMES** explains some ways to put your wellbeing first.

**The triggers for** negative stress taking hold in teachers are typically either workload or money-related pressures. Julian Stanley, CEO of Education Support Partnership, knows too well the extent of the problem in education. The organisation’s most recent health survey revealed that a massive 88% of all staff working in education had suffered from stress, 72% from anxiety and 45% from depression. This makes for deeply unhappy reading. How could we let things get so bad?

Evidently the profession needs help, but in the absence of an adequately funded and resourced programme of wellbeing for teachers that goes beyond the lip service of an acknowledgment that wellbeing matters, finding our own path to greater happiness and balance in schools is crucial.

**12 wellbeing strategies**

Here are twelve possible tools that might give your wellbeing a well-earned boost throughout the year.

1. Learn what your triggers are and acknowledge when you are moving from a healthy state of stimulation to potentially harmful negative stress. This is essentially about self-knowledge and yet many of us can be taken by surprise of the intensity of stress when it hits. Know your warning signs.

2. Take positive action sooner rather than later. The natural instinct of teachers is to carry on regardless. This is counter-productive and not good for you or your pupils.

3. Consider developing mindfulness skills. As the Education Support Partnership explains, with techniques such as breathing-focused meditation, mindfulness is closer to mainstream than ever before: many UK schools are using the Mindfulness in Schools Project.

4. Explore some of the research on wellbeing that exists out there. The New Economics Foundation’s ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ remains a great tool for teachers to adopt. The five ways are to connect with others, to be active, to take notice of the world around you, to keep learning, and to give.

5. Get outside every day. Walk, cycle, run – whatever makes you feel good. And if you can get out into the countryside or coast, even better. Mounting evidence suggests that nature can have a positive impact on wellbeing.

6. Talk to trusted family, friends or colleagues. Don’t allow concerns to mount. Others can offer valuable perspective at times of stress but may not know you are struggling unless you open up. If you are happier speaking to someone anonymously, try the Education Support Partnership (08000 562 561) or the Samaritans (116 123).

7. Work in collaboration with a colleague on an area of your work that you would like to improve. Continuing professional and personal development and the sense of improvement that may ensue can greatly contribute to wellbeing at work, and collaborations can lead to a greater sense of camaraderie amongst colleagues.

8. Allow yourself some quiet time each day. Meditate if you can, otherwise, just allow yourself the peace to switch off from immediate demands. Not always easy, but just a few minutes can help. The Education Support Partnership suggests that simple breathing techniques can help. For example, to relax you might breathe in for a count of 4 and breathe out for a count of 4; to become more energised you should breathe in for a count of 7 and out for a count of 3. Repeat each of these activities as often as possible taking care to maintain steady, connected breaths.

9. Move a little more during the course of the working day. A colleague I had many years ago taught me tap dancing in the corridor outside our adjacent rooms. Every lunchtime we would learn a new step. It would never pass the critical eyes of the Strictly judges, but it was fun.

10. Look at your diet. This doesn’t mean eliminating everything you consider to be a treat, but some foods can leave us feeling sluggish so it’s worth considering whether anything you are currently consuming might be having that effect on you. A general rule of thumb is to increase fruits and vegetables if at all possible.

11. Consider journaling. Keeping a learning journal might help us to gain a greater sense of wellbeing at work, if only through the opportunity such activity gives us for determining what’s not working for us right now.

12. Don’t forget to pursue what makes you feel happy. Find the time to listen to your favourite music, see your favourite people, go to the gigs you want to go to, see that show, read that book and so on.
What’s in this month’s SEN and Safeguarding section?

SEND assessment continues to be a hot topic in 2016 with no sign of abating, so for this edition of Insight you’ve got a wonderful four page special from Jean Gross all about preparing pupils with the skills and aptitudes for new assessment models. If you don’t have a speech and language therapist in your school then Gareth D Morewood’s SENCology blog post may change your mind. Not had time to read it yet? Well I’m proud to present our first ebook from Anita Devi all about time management strategies for SENCOs. Take Time is the perfect tool to give you back your schedule so find out how to get your copy. Our safeguarding training for this edition looks at how to assess the personal values of your staff and how they can affect important decisions. We’re putting the spotlight on pastoral with a write up of what I learned about pastoral care and boarding when I visited St Edward’s in Oxford.

Evie Prysor-Jones, Content Lead

Contributors in this issue

Jean Gross is a national expert on inclusion and frequently acts in an advisory capacity to the government. She has been a teacher, an educational psychologist and a head of children's services in a local authority.

Gareth D Morewood is director of curriculum support at a large secondary school. He is a passionate advocate of inclusive education and regularly speaks at national conferences.

Anita Devi is a special educational needs consultant, policy developer, strategist and trainer with experience from early years to postgraduate provision in the UK and overseas.

Abi Clay is an independent consultant and safeguarding specialist with over 30 years’ experience in the FE sector. She has achieved outstanding recognition from Ofsted for her work on the Prevent agenda.

Forgotten your log-in details or want to add more members from your school or organisation?
Email our customer services team at customer.services@optimus-education.com or call us on 0845 450 6404.

Top tweets from @OptimusSEND

Know what a SALT can offer your school? It's just the tip of the iceberg. owl.li/W22c2 @gdmorewood

Great visit to St Edwards school in Oxford this morning. Such a pity about the weather though, would love to have explored the grounds!!

Richard Bird looks at teaching resistance to #radicalisation and #extremism owl.li/XICxU #EducateAgainstHate #childprotection

Be part of the Optimus SEN and Safeguarding network

Live Chat
Can't find what you’re looking for on optimus-education.com? Click on the Live Chat or Help button and connect with our customer services team.

Ask the Experts
Got a specific question? Get in touch with our expert panel by submitting your query via optimus-education.com/ask-question

Twitter
Want to get engaged in discussion and connect with your peers? Follow us on Twitter @OptimusSEND

Download a digital version of your Optimus Education Insight magazine by logging into your My Account area on optimus-education.com
Testing times: preparing pupils with SEND

In this four page special, Jean Gross explains how memory building, resilience and self-belief are essential skills for pupils with SEND and gives practical examples of how to teach these aptitudes.

The future is new grammar, punctuation and spelling tests at KS1, repeating KS2 SATs for those who don’t pass first time, a G grade at GCSE to become a zero on the new 1-9 scale, and a knowledge-based curriculum. Many aspects of the new system risk leaving pupils with SEND believing they are failures. For example, imagine understanding that you’re a zero – any child who plays video games will recognise that this is the bottom level. Or being told you’re working at a Year 1 level when you’re actually in Year 3! An unmotivated pupil is not a learning pupil. In this article I explore practical ways of avoiding this.

Top test terms
The first thing SENCOs need to do is put in place a system for teaching the top terms used in tests. Children need to analyse each word:

- by its sounds – what does it begin with/end with/rhyme with/number of syllables
- by its meaning – children should agree their own child-friendly definition for the word being taught, using a dictionary like Collins CoBuild to help them. They might also say where else they might see the word (e.g. ‘examine’, ‘outline’), apart from in tests, and make up a gesture to help them remember the word
- by grammatical structure – identifying the word as a verb, and making up a sentence containing it.

All the learning should be multisensory. Children write the word, say it, see it and hear it. Then they will need lots of practice. They might sort cards with test answers into correct and incorrect examples, say whether an adult’s definition is true or false, complete a quiz about the words, or tell a partner what they know about the word.

Making learning memorable
Remind your colleagues that the more ways a concept is introduced to the brain, the more brain pathways are created and the more regions it is stored in. Get teachers to make lessons memorable by teaching important material and concepts using all the senses. For example, if a lesson plan includes teaching about the heart, pupils might watch a short video, read text aloud, mimic the movement of the heart and blood flow, and draw the heart and the parts that make blood flow. Scientific research has also revealed that the most successful construction of a memory takes place when new content is linked to prior knowledge. Have TAs pre-teach learners with SEND to make these links – for example showing a picture related to the content the teacher will introduce and asking pupils to tell them everything they can about the picture, or constructing a mind map of what pupils already know about a topic.

Learning to memorise
Next, children need to be taught how to commit knowledge to memory, and how to revise. As the graph below shows, memory traces soon fade unless they are topped up by going over the new learning at steadily increasing intervals – after five minutes, an hour, a day, a week, a month, a term. Class teachers should be encouraged to take ten minutes a day to keep familiar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tick</th>
<th>Calculate</th>
<th>Outline</th>
<th>Demonstrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underline</td>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Comment on</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Examine</td>
<td>Explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match</td>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Interpret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-write</td>
<td>List</td>
<td>Discuss</td>
<td>Infer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Analyse</td>
<td>Indicate</td>
<td>Illustrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Persuade/argue</td>
<td>Justify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy</td>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Summarise</td>
<td>Conclude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ways to learn spellings

Information – like number facts – simmering, right through KS2. They need to know that it is of no use at all to have children memorise a different spelling list each week unless each list includes some previously taught items for revision.

Children’s revision needs to be active, not simply re-reading material. They can:

• teach another child the information or process
• rework information using graphic organisers (www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer)
• create their own flashcards of key facts or items and test each other in pairs or create quizzes for each other
• make a film of themselves explaining and demonstrating a concept or process, perhaps using the app, Explain Everything, to re-watch at intervals.

Learning spellings

Not all children learn spellings in the same way, and it is worth systematically trying out several methods until you find the right one for a given child. Some examples are in the clouds above.

Mnemonics work best with pictures, supplied or drawn by the children. Try these:

Because: big elephants can’t always use small exits
Rhythm: rhythm helps your two hips move
They can be applied to the whole word, or just to the tricky part
Special: a CIA agent is a special agent
There are hundreds of mnemonics on the web; see the box for some of my favourites.

Spelling mnemonics
- Embarrassed: it’s only natural to go really red and smile shyly when you are embarrassed
- Beautiful: big ears aren’t ugly, they’re beautiful
- Wednesday: we do not eat sandwiches on Wednesdays
- Hear/here: you ‘hear’ with your ears, but ‘here’ is where you are.
- Necessary: never eat chips, eat salad sandwiches and raspberry yoghurt.
- Island: an island is land surrounded by water

Learning times tables

Finally, every SENCO needs to pass on tips for those children who just can’t remember their times tables by heart. Most can manage the two, five and ten times tables, so build on that. Elevens are easy too (at least up to 99).

Threes: Multiply the number by two, then add the original number to the total - so 8 X 3 is the same as 8 X 2 plus 8
Fours: Multiply the number by 2, then by 2 again
Sixes: Multiply the number by five, then add the original number to the total – 8 x 6 is the same as 8 x 5 plus 8
Sevens: Break the seven into two and five – to work out 3 X 7, add 3 X 2 and 3 X 5
Eights: Double the number three times – for 5 X 8, double 5 to make 10, double 10 to make 20, double 20 to make 40
Nines: Use the finger method (you can find an example on YouTube)
Twelves: Try using the list approach: search for 12 times table trick on YouTube

Continued >>
Testing times: preparing pupils with SEND continued....

Building resilience

Even with the best memory strategies, the increasing and regular use of ‘marks out of 100’ and standardised tests in schools mean that many children with SEND will experience repeated knocks to their confidence and self-belief. The latest Ofsted grade descriptors require that ‘pupils love the challenge of learning and are resilient to failure’, for those who find learning difficult this resilience is particularly important.

SENCOs should therefore be thinking about how to train class and subject teachers and TAs in a basic toolkit of resilience-promoting strategies. These include:

- explicitly teaching children a growth mindset
- praising effort and strategies not success
- valuing mistakes
- whole class and small group work to teach persistence in the face of difficulty, and how to bounce back after failure
- using assessment systems that demonstrate progress, even if in small steps.

Growth mindset

If time after time children get only three out of ten on a spelling test they soon begin to believe they are useless at spelling. Similarly, if they get low scaled scores year after year on maths tests they soon say they are no good at maths. This represents a fixed mindset – a belief that ability is fixed and not open to change. A growth mindset, on the other hand, is a belief that abilities can change, that the brain is a muscle that grows if exercised.

You can find teaching resources at

www.mindsetworks.com/offerings
www.stepitup2thrive.org/
www.eighthugs.com/lesson-plan-growth-mindset

In a US experiment, 12 year olds were randomly assigned to either eight short weekly workshops on study skills, or to workshops where they were taught that intelligence is malleable and can increase with training. By the end of the year the group who had learned about growth mindset had made significantly more progress in maths than the group who learned study skills.

Praising effort and strategies, not success

Closely linked to growth mindset is getting teachers to stop praising success. If children receive praise for getting all their spellings right, or meeting the required standard on a test, those who struggle with learning will rarely get a look in. And those who get the praise will actually make greater progress if, as the work of Professor Carol Dweck has proved, their parents and teachers ignore success and instead praise effort and strategies. They might for example say ‘Well done for putting so much effort into learning your spellings this week, you must have practised every day at home, or ‘you’ve put a lot of hard work into your maths lately and it’s paying off’.

Praising successful strategies is even more effective: ‘Well done for listening carefully to the sounds in the words,’ or ‘I noticed you used the hundred square there, that worked well for you.’

Adults need not only to point out successful strategies, but get children themselves to reflect on what’s working for them. I’ll never forget the skilled Reading Recovery teachers I watched who would turn back to a specific page in a book a child had just finished and say ‘Show me all the times on this page when you made a mistake and you sorted it out, all by yourself. Do you remember how you did that?’

Valuing mistakes

Learners with SEND are likely to make lots of mistakes, but teachers and TAs can build their resilience by communicating that mistakes are essential, and even interesting. As Professor Guy Claxton, says ‘Learning begins with the ability to say I do not know’. We learn through getting things wrong. I know some teachers who constantly say ‘that’s a great mistake’ or choose your favourite mistake at the end of a lesson, and get children to explore what can be learned from it. It’s helpful to tell children the story of Edison, who invented the lightbulb after many unsuccessful attempts. When people asked him what it was like to fail so many times, he said ‘I haven’t failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that didn’t work.’

They say .... | To promote a growth mindset, you say...
---|---
I can’t do it | You can’t do it yet
I’ll never be any good at … | You can definitely get better at it. How can I help?
This is too hard | It’s making your brain work hard – that’s good, you’re learning
I give up | Maybe try a different way?
I’m stuck | What helped you last time you got stuck?
Ideas from SEAL

Use the statements and ideas below to explore persistence in the face of difficulties.

**Bouncing back after failure**

It’s also necessary to explicitly teach children the skills they need to bounce back after failure, and to persist in the face of difficulty. You can find brilliant lesson ideas in the freely downloadable ‘Going for Goals’ (primary) and ‘Keep on Learning’ (secondary) SEAL resources (www.sealcommunity.org). There are whole-class learning opportunities like the ones above, and also small group sessions (both primary and secondary) available online which could be used with struggling learners who need extra help in developing resilience.

**Assessment systems that demonstrate progress**

Finally, SENCOs need to put in place assessment systems that demonstrate to children with SEND that they can excel in some areas and that they are making progress in others, albeit more slowly than their peers. I would like to see every school seeking to award a certificate of outstanding achievement in at least one curriculum area, each year, to every child. For some that might be maths or English, but for others it might be social and emotional skills, or PE, or art. The point is to be outstanding in something.

Then there is demonstrating progress in small steps. At The Harbour Special School and Pupil Referral Unit in Portsmouth, staff use grids of ‘I am able to …’ statements, providing a progression from a preschool developmental stage through to the skills needed to be successful in the upper secondary years and beyond. The progression includes social and emotional learning. The grids are printed on a blue background and progressively coloured in green when students demonstrate the skills. The system is very motivating for students, who can see the blue grids gradually changing to green as their skills develop. ‘For example, all our students want to belong to a group but don’t always know how’, say school staff. ‘But after six months when they have a lot of green growing on their social skills grids, they see “I can learn how to do this”’.

That is the challenge for our work with learners with SEND – to turn ‘I can’t do this’ into ‘I might be able to if I keep trying.’ The challenge has always been there; it is not new. Recent reforms to the curriculum and assessment arrangements may have made it more difficult – but we can still do it, if we try!

---

**Conference**

The 14th annual SENCO Update conference has now launched! Taking place on May 24th in London, this year’s theme is focused around embedding the code in 2016. For more information and the full programme head to my.optimus-education.com/conferences/SENCO16

---

If you would like to download a PDF pack containing a case study, SLT briefing and assessment model simply log into our website and go to my.optimus-education.com/node/15369
Introducing the tool for

time-poor SENCOs

EVIE PRYSOR-JONES reviews an exciting new ebook for SENCOs

It's a phrase we hear again and again: 'I just don't have the time!' When you stop to think about it, this is a very strange phrase. You could argue that time is a human construct and doesn't really exist so how can it be possible that you don't have enough of it? But then you might think this argument is just procrastination and you don't have the time for it. The bottom line is that from the moment we wake up in the morning most of us are trying to cram in as many activities as we can before we have to go to bed again. This can't be healthy. This behaviour means we never give ourselves the space to just stop and enjoy ourselves which inevitably leads to increased stress, less productive days and, quite often, the sudden and desperate need to go and eat a lot of chocolate.

This lack-of-time phenomenon doesn't just apply to those working in education, but it is much harder to justify switching off your working brain for a well-deserved evening of relaxation when the marking that isn't being done will affect a classroom of pupils. Many of us, at some point, will have wished to be Doctor Who or own Bernard's watch, or be given a time-turner*. However, the wise among us know from watching the Back to the Future films that time travel is not to be considered lightly.

So unfortunately, we're stuck with making to-do lists, prioritising and trying to choose between a social life and getting enough sleep. Or are we?

Activity lists vs to-do lists

There have been many time management systems and ideals suggested over the years – in the 80s everyone was about Filofaxes – but with the advance of cognitive science we are able to learn more about how the brain is organised. Everyone thinks that making a to-do list is a great way of staying on track, and you can't deny that writing tasks down is much easier than trying to remember them. However, a to-do list is linear and can dictate the order in which you do things. What it doesn't often do is take into account how long a task takes to do. How often have you worked methodically down a list and by the end of the day realised that you should have done number four first? 'Our thoughts tend to be more circular and interconnected' explains Anita Devi, special educational needs consultant and author of the book Take Time.

'Ve don't just think one idea, we also think about all the different aspects that surround it' In her ebook, Take Time, Anita Devi explains how instead of writing a to-do list, thinking and creating activity lists gives you the opportunity to take more into account when planning your day. To-do lists are never ending, while activity lists can group tasks together and can easily be matched with specific time boundaries. Take Time goes into detail on how to set up these time boundaries and contains a series of self-paced activities you can work through which will help you reframe your approach to time management.

* All fictional characters who can meddle with time: Doctor Who is a Time Lord who can travel through time and space; Bernard has a watch that can stop time while he can carry on; a time-turner is a necklace given to Hermione in the Harry Potter books which allows her to travel back in time.
Nothingness time

One of my favourite ideas from *Take Time* is ‘nothingness time’. Apart from its very Lewis Carroll connotations, nothingness actually has some very sensible ideas behind it.

Nothingness time is the time you put aside and keep empty, on a regular basis. The idea is that even with the greatest time management system in the world unexpected tasks will always crop up. Usually these tasks will then push all your carefully organised priorities out the window and you have to spend your evening working rather than relaxing.

If, however, you have time set aside specifically for this reason then either that unexpected task can be completed during your nothingness time or you use it to complete the tasks that got pushed. If you’re lucky, no unexpected tasks have happened that day and you can use your nothingness time for whatever you like!

Due to the flexibility of the systems outlined in *Take Time*, you can choose when and for how long your nothingness time is. Perhaps you want 30 minutes every day set aside, or 30 minutes in the morning before teaching begins, and 30 minutes in the evening once school is over. Or you could save it for a specific time once a week. The most important thing is it fits with your schedule.

Creating a schedule

In the ebook Anita suggests ways of creating a schedule or diary for how you lay out your time using a personalised approach to be effective in your role. The method works for those in either full-time or part-time employment. A structured schedule helps you avoid distractions and gain the confidence to say no when appropriate.

The personal elements of time management

Throughout the ebook Anita outlines strategies and activities you can use to build your own time management system. You may be thinking that the ebook is just a compilation of ways to help you become more organised, but there is actually a lot more to it than that. Lots of us will have tried various diets, hobbies or New Year’s resolutions over the years so all of us know how hard it is to stick to something, no matter how much you want to. Simply saying ‘I will manage my time better’ just doesn’t work, which is why Anita includes activities that encourage you to take a good look at yourself, your way of working and what you want to achieve. Your perfect time management system shouldn’t work for anyone else because it will only work if it is personalised. Certainly sharing what you have learned with colleagues is advisable but the important thing is that you believe in what you’re doing and why.

You don’t have to take our word for it! The ebook contains a few case studies from people Anita has worked with on developing these time management strategies.

Taking the plunge

Changing the way you work and approach your management of time can seem like a big step. Time may at some points seem very rigid, yet at other times it speeds up when you don’t want it to and slows down when you’re willing it on. The key point of *Take Time* is that time shouldn’t control you and although we have yet to discover how to control time, it is possible to learn how to manage your own.

Even with the greatest time management system in the world unexpected tasks will always crop up

The key point of *Take Time* is that time shouldn’t control you

Download a digital copy of *Take Time* from my.optimus-education.com/TakeTime
School-led SEND provision: speech and language therapy

GARETH D MOREWOOD highlights benefits of speech and language provision beyond communication

With diminishing external services the pressure on schools is increasing; it is often up to schools to secure appropriate provision themselves. I have written previously about how we, at Priestnall School, are developing services and provision with feeder primary schools (Morewood & Drews, 2015). There seems to be an ever growing interest in our flexible packages of support as part of a school-led system. In this post I explore speech and language therapy and the importance of communication as part of an early intervention.

What services can a speech and language therapist offer?
The therapist can play a key role when communicating with parents/carers, teachers and other professionals about the pupil as they spend time with the student and monitor their behavior. The SALT can perform informal assessment/activities – such as looking at books and pictures with students but also use formal assessment to look at how well their speech and language skills are developing in line with their peers. This knowledge of assessment means a SALT is invaluable when undertaking EHCP Needs Assessments.

Also useful is how a SALT can benefit other members of staff by giving advice and information to those working with pupils regarding speech, language and communication difficulties. Setting detailed individual therapy plans for school to deliver means provision can be regulated and monitored. These therapy plans can be with individual students but a SALT can also provide therapy sessions with groups of children to focus on developing either speech sounds, language development or social communication skills.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the Lancashire Judgement and the legal status of speech and language therapy as an educational need: “To teach an adult who has lost his larynx because of cancer might be considered as treatment rather than education. But to teach a child who has never been able to communicate by language, whether because of some chromosomal disorder ... Or because of social cause ... seems to us just as much educational provision as to teach a child to communicate in writing.”

R vs Lancashire County Council ex parte M (1989)

Benefits of SALT
- listening skills, concentration, staying on task
- memory for information and sequences
- following instructions – needing explanations/repetitions
- ability to organise self (timetables, tasks, equipment)
- ability to pronounce longer words clearly
- phonological awareness [sound patterns such as rhyme and syllables]
- expressing self with clear, fluent speech that is easy to understand
- word finding – getting the right word at the right time
- sentence formulation – grammar
- organising sentences into longer accounts e.g. explaining or telling a story
- understanding word meanings and general vocabulary
- understanding abstract vocabulary/ concepts e.g. maths, time
- understanding straightforward written language – instructions, worksheets, text
- understanding non-literal language and making inferences
- conversational skills – turn taking, staying on topic, good listening.

Why is speech, language and communication important?

SPEECH SOUNDS
Young people need to be able to communicate clear messages through speech. This requires producing sounds accurately in the right order.

COMMUNICATION
Using speech and language in everyday situations enables young people to interact appropriately with others. These skills are important for making friends, having conversations, taking part in social situations and building confidence.

LANGUAGE
Young people should be able to express themselves, build sentences, put sentences together to build up conversations and understand what people are saying to them.

SEN, SAFEGUARDING AND PASTORAL
@OptimusSEND

References:
Personal vs professional in safeguarding: training activity

Safeguarding and child protection demand quick and measured decision making. This training activity from ANN RAYMOND will help you identify when those judgements are professional or personal.

When there is the possibility that a pupil is in danger it can often fall to school staff to decide on the best course of action. This decision may need to be made quickly and without discussion with other members of staff, which can run the risk of personal values clouding an individual’s judgement. With this in mind, it’s important for all members of staff to think about their personal opinions on various topics and consider how they might affect their decision making in certain situations.

The following training activity is an excerpt activity from our Safeguarding Whole-School Programme in our In-House Training service. To access more courses, visit us at my.optimus-education.com/in-house-training.

What you need to run this activity

- Copies of Activity 1: situation cards.
- Two large cards, one saying ‘OKAY’ and one saying ‘NOT OKAY’.
- Enough room for attendees to walk about.

Activity 1: Personal values and professional responses

Aims:

- to demonstrate that an individual’s upbringing, childhood experiences, personal beliefs and values and professional training can affect their attitudes towards child welfare
- to emphasise that it is the professional responsibility of all staff, in whatever role, to be alert to the signs of abuse and report concerns in line with the school’s and local authority’s procedures.

Preparation:

Print the situation cards (see page 61) and decide whether you prefer to laminate and split into individual cards. Print OKAY and NOT OKAY on two A4 sheets. If they are laminated they can be used again.

Ensure you have all the resources in the room. As this activity requires more space than just seating, look at the layout of the room and consider how you can facilitate the activity, preferably avoiding the need to move chairs or furniture during the training. Decide whether you prefer to read out the situations yourself, or ask a colleague to read, leaving you free to observe and make a note of any interesting points (for example a situation where everyone is in agreement, or one which causes hesitancy).

Timing

Total time needed is 45 minutes.

Explain activity and get attendees ready – 5 minutes.

Attendee’s responses to the situations – 20 minutes.

Feedback – 20 minutes.

Running the activity

Ask someone to place the OKAY and NOT OKAY cards at each end of the room, or as far from each other as possible.

Explain

This activity asks you to listen to a situation and respond as an individual, not as a professional member of staff. If for any reason a situation feels uncomfortable for you it is entirely acceptable for you to decline to respond.

You are asked to respond by walking to whichever card most closely resembles your viewpoint – you feel the situation is okay, or it is not okay. It is likely that you will hear a situation and think

'It’s important for all members of staff to think about their personal opinions on various topics and consider how they might affect their decision making'
'Well it depends...' For the purposes of this activity try to respond without asking questions. The situations relate to child welfare rather than abuse and the descriptions are not intended to be disturbing.

**Performing the activity**
Ask attendees to stand and move to a place where they can walk between the cards. They then listen to a situation and walk to the OKAY or NOT OKAY card. When everyone has stopped moving the next situation will be read out. Remind everyone to be careful not to trip over bags or anything on the floor.

**Feedback**
Ask attendees how they felt about the activity. Did it make them think? Were there situations they had never really considered before? Describe to them what you noticed: perhaps a situation where there was unanimous agreement, or a situation that was evenly split between okay and not okay.

Ask why attendees responded as they did. Was it due to their own family values, or faith? Were some drawing on personal experience? Or professional experience? (Note: you do not want any attendee to go into detail. You just want to draw out broad explanations).

For some of the situations there may have been only one or two people at the OKAY or the NOT OKAY point. Ask how it felt to be in the minority, or the odd one out.

Thank the attendees for taking part and ask them to return to their seat.

**What the activity should teach you**
The activity demonstrates that there is rarely universal agreement about children's welfare. Our personal values are deeply important to us as individuals, but if we left safeguarding to personal choice, the safety of children would depend on who happened to see them, or be working with them. This would not be fair.

It can feel uncomfortable to be the ‘odd one out’ – to be concerned about something when no-one else seems to be. Nevertheless it is always better to be safe than sorry, so concerns should always be reported.

All staff, volunteers and governors have a professional responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and to have regard for the statutory guidance for schools. That guidance expects us all to be alert to signs of abuse and report concerns through the school's procedures. The DL and social workers (if they become involved) will be sensitive to religious, cultural and family values, while acting in the best interests of the child.

**Activity 2: Vigilance – how everyone contributes to safeguarding**
To support the personal values training activity you could pair it with Activity 2 which looks at the vigilance of all members of staff.

**Aims:**
- to emphasise that abuse is not simply about bruises and injuries
- to encourage attendees to identify aspects of appearance and behaviour that might imply a problem to be addressed
- to give attendees holding different roles in school the opportunity to think about their contribution to the identification of concerns
- to provide all attendees with the opportunity to explain the types of indicators they might notice in their particular role
- to continue the theme of the training, that safeguarding is everybody's business and all staff have an equal role to play.

**What you need to run this activity**
- A copy of the list of possible indicators (see box opposite).
- Pens and pencils or flip chart paper and pens.

**Preparation**
Ensure you have sufficient copies of the handout list and pens.

**Timing**
Total time needed is 35 minutes.

Explain activity, distribute the handout list and get into groups – up to 5 minutes.

Small group discussion and completing the handout – 20 minutes.

Feedback – 10 minutes.

**Running the Activity**
Distribute the list of indicators and pens.

**Explain**
Every member of staff, including volunteers and governors, has a professional responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and to have regard for the statutory guidance for schools. That guidance expects us all to be alert to signs of abuse and report concerns through the school's procedures. The DL and social workers (if they become involved) will be sensitive to religious, cultural and family values, while acting in the best interests of the child.
responsibility to be alert to signs that a pupil may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, abuse or neglect.

Staff working in different roles and in different parts of the school have the opportunity to observe pupils in a range of settings. A midday supervisor sees children at play, a teacher sees children at work, a teaching assistant may spend time in a one to one situation, a senior leader may notice patterns in a child's attendance.

**Performing the activity**

Ask attendees to get into small groups and apply the question ‘Who might notice and in what circumstances?’ to each of the possible indicators on the handout list. The group should nominate someone to lead the feedback.

**Feedback**

Take each possible indicator in turn and ask for some feedback. If one group of staff, teachers, for example, seem to be dominant, draw out ideas from other staff by fielding questions. The staff on reception see parents every day. What might they notice about a parent? Midday supervisors are more likely to be aware of a pupil sneaking out at lunchtime. It could be an innocent visit to the shop, but it could be connected to sexual exploitation.

---

### What the activity should teach you

Safeguarding is everybody’s responsibility and the school values the contribution every staff member makes to keeping pupils safe. The school expects everyone to be alert to signs of abuse.

Each time a member of staff reports a concern it contributes to the school’s understanding of that pupil and their circumstances. Every concern is a piece of a jigsaw that helps us to see the big picture.

---

### Activity 1: situation cards

| Dad regularly bathing his 10 year old son | A 12 year old returning from school each day to an empty house | Mum and dad smoking 30 cigarettes a day each and getting food from a food bank |
| Enrolling a child in boarding school age 7 | A single gay man adopting twin baby boys | Placing a black child for adoption with a white family |
| A mother limiting the food intake of her severely disabled son, because he is getting too heavy for her to manage and she doesn’t want him to go into care | A teacher ignoring a pupil’s bruise because ‘he is always racing around and falling over’ | A senior leader refuses to take part in any physical intervention because she doesn’t want to get hurt |
| Naturist parents encourage their children to be naked at home | Taking child benefit away from families earning over £60,000 a year | A teaching assistant gives a pupil a lift home every day because they live in the same street |
| A child is not allowed to have friends from outside his own religion | A learning disabled couple having a baby | A member of staff watching adult pornography at home |
E-Safety in 2016

ALAN MACKENZIE outlines how we need to look at e-safety in 2016, what we’re learning and how schools can evolve alongside technology

Prevent, high-profile media reporting, increased Ofsted focus, pressures of the curriculum, incidents outside school impacting in school, difficulty engaging with parents – just to name a few. The focus on e-safety has never been more than it is now, and it’s growing.

A bit of history
The World Wide Web was invented in 1989 and it wasn’t until the mid-1990s when significant numbers of people started to jump online and have a go. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) wasn’t formed until 2006 and we didn’t have the landmark ‘Safer Children in a Digital World’ report from Professor Tanya Byron until early 2008, which for many, myself included, established the building blocks for a greater understanding of the challenges ahead.

Online behaviour
But whilst we’re learning more all the time, we’re still in relative infancy when it comes to understanding this whole notion of online risk. There are so many variables and whilst including e-safety under the umbrella term of safeguarding is vital, there is far more to it.

From a knowledge and understanding perspective science is starting to have a positive impact on our understanding of online behaviour and why that behaviour can sometimes change as a result of technology use. For a long time I have stated what children and young people are doing online is not as relevant as why they’re doing it. If we can understand the why, we can help with the what.

What we’ve learnt
Since I started on my e-safety journey, I think we have moved on significantly in some areas, but not so much in others. For example, I have recently been asked by a local authority to deliver a course for schools about using Facebook as a way of engaging the wider school community. It’s a small but important sign of the times and fits in with my personal motto: ‘e-safety should never be a barrier to the innovative use of technology.’ This sort of course simply wouldn’t have existed a few years ago. But continuing to concentrate on the negatives means some will struggle to embrace the positives. The point I’m making is that in the past many have understandably listened to the rare horror stories and used that as justification not to innovate.

If we as adults and professionals can’t use the very tools that technology gives us, then how on earth do we empower children? There are some truly horrendous things going on out there, in the real and virtual worlds, but education must be about balance and context.

Empowering our technical selves
If we continue to tell children not to talk to strangers, at what point do we tell them it’s okay? Not an easy question to answer, but hugely relevant. What about the sentence, ‘don’t share personal information?’ What does ‘personal’ mean in a connected age? Used as statements with significant educational context these sentences may be relevant in some circumstances, but as rules to keep safe they’re outdated.

Remember that technology is just a set of tools with a defined purpose. ‘I know nothing about technology’ is a statement that needs to disappear: we’re in 2016 and we all use technology. Open, honest and engaging conversations are key to empowering positive behaviour, increasing knowledge and risk mitigation and the fact that risk does not necessarily mean harm. Behaviour should be the focus; the concerns of children don’t always mirror our own assumptions so listen to the children and learn from them.

The number one piece of advice
All of this can put an enormous strain on schools. One piece of advice that I know works and will allow you to move onward and upward: establish an e-safety group or committee.

How?
Essentials include: a wide membership to allow multiple inputs; including pupils with a shared responsibilities to reduce the pressure on one person; and agreed terms of reference so that everybody is clear.

This one initiative alone can significantly reduce the pressure on responsible persons, allowing you to embed e-safety, strategically plan in particular regards to the curriculum and education need, incident management, staff and parental awareness and so much more.

Follow Alan on Twitter @esafetyadvise. A guide to establishing your e-safety group: my.optimus-education.com/node/14500
In January of this year two of my colleagues and I took the train to Oxford to visit St Edward’s School. Despite the awful weather, the red brick school buildings are still impressive and the grounds immediately remind you of the nearby university colleges and lawns. Unfortunately, the rain did put a stop to any looking around I was hoping to do and even the pupils were reduced to dark shapes dashing between buildings with blazers pulled over their heads.

We had come to St Edward’s to meet with Tom James, sub-warden at the school. My interest in visiting lay in the fact that 85% of St Edward’s pupils board. The boarding school setting is interesting for a variety of reasons. The difference in a pupil’s mind between a school being somewhere you go to learn, and a school being somewhere you live, must be huge.

At St Edward’s 75% of the boarding pupils live approximately an hour’s drive from the school, yet choose to board. This is because the benefits of boarding not only include accommodation in close proximity to the lunch hall, but also access to a vast amount of extra-curricular activities.

These activities are so sought after that many of the day pupils come back on Saturday for sporting events, many stay Saturday evening for fun activities and could even be in on Sunday to join in with study groups. With all this going on you may as well sleep there too!

Boarding and safeguarding
What interests me about this arrangement is the safeguarding and child protection aspects. At any school, while pupils are within the school grounds the staff members are in local parentis and have a safeguarding duty. At a boarding school this continues full time. At St Edward’s, within the houses they have a housemistress or master, a matron and tutors. St Edward’s is also extremely fortunate in its on-site counselling service that all pupils and staff have access to. When talking to Tom James about the high levels of pastoral care he explained that the key is to ensure that it is embedded throughout the school. As pupils live on site the school does become their home so it is essential they feel safe and cared for.

However, it has its challenges. ‘With Prevent high on the agenda, awareness of where pupils are at all times, inside school and out, has become an increasing concern’ said Tom James. On a large campus where pupils can nip back to their houses for break-time toast, the staff can feel concerned about the level of awareness they need to have about pupils’ whereabouts. Interestingly, at a mainstream school where all pupils are day pupils the staff are expected to know about pupils sneaking out of school during the day, but wouldn’t be expected to know exactly which bit of the school they are in. Why is this different in a boarding school when pupils’ attendance is recorded at every lesson?

If you have any questions about pastoral care in a boarding setting, remember you can use Ask the Expert at my.optimus-education.com/ask-question
Why were Ofsted so impressed with SMSC?
I think Ofsted were impressed with how important relationships and behaviour are here. That's amongst all parts of the school community – staff, children and parents. Our Parent View had 116 responses which I think is an indication of how we have worked with our parents in a supportive way. We have a close relationship with the parish and common aims. These relationships have permeated everything we do and have helped us to come from a 'wobbly satisfactory' to being outstanding.

Ofsted commented that the teachers work hard to earn the good behaviour of the children. We have a very consistently applied behaviour policy and staff use it very positively. We have children coming from other schools with behaviour issues but everyone helps, including the children, and it's not long before new pupils are exhibiting the behaviour we expect.

The staff have high expectations and the children like each other. This doesn't happen by accident, and Ofsted recognised this. It's been a gradual process.

How have you improved SMSC in your school?
Knowledge Centres were initially introduced as part of the London Challenge and we are a Knowledge Centre for SEN and PE within the borough. The children have enjoyed being part of the lead we've taken. We organise sporting events and are at the hub centre of what's going on in Harrow. This recognition gives the children a sense of pride and belonging. Our role in sports development within the area has enabled us to bring out the importance of sportsmanship; for example, we expect players and supporters to respect referees.

We have a buddy system between Year 5 and Reception and a pupil chaplaincy team consisting of 16 children. There is also a staff chaplain and the staff and pupils are there for others to talk to if they have a problem. They are also involved in the liturgy, peer mentoring and fund raising.

A learning support assistant has been trained in counselling as part of Place2Be and approaches many issues through play. If a child had a problem we were finding that there was a lapse of six weeks in referring to CAMHS. This way we can refer directly if there is a bereavement instead of waiting. We are often able to deal in-house with difficulties in the early stages.

A safe environment
The children feel safe here and there has been no bullying to speak of for three years. The systems are in place and pupils know they can trust the adults. Our only
difficulty sometimes occurs when pupils hear things at home and repeat it in school, but we soon address that. We’ve learnt from experience over time. For example, we had a Romanian family arrive in the school. They were all in tears at having to leave their child in this new environment. I had to take her to the classroom, explain to the class teacher that she didn’t speak English and leave her there. I never wanted that to happen again.

To address this issue we employed ‘ambassadors’ to help welcome families. We have Polish, Tamil and Romanian ambassadors who speak the language and help support both the child and the family when they arrive in school. We’ve also got an English ambassador because we discovered that some of our parents can’t read and write and need help with communication too.

How is your SMSC provision incorporated into the curriculum?
We cover some aspects in RE and PSHE. We also have some individual projects, for example one that focuses on health run in conjunction with Watford FC. It’s a course that lasts for six weeks with 45 minute sessions each week. We are careful to ensure there is always a teacher present in a supportive capacity.

We are an inclusive school catering for a very mixed range of religions and cultures. We study all the world religions but Judaism is studied every year and we alternate years between Hinduism and Islam. A rabbi was in the school on the day that Ofsted called so they could see our commitment in practice. They were amazed at the knowledge that the children had of the Jewish religion which really reflected the quality of teaching they’d received.

How is SMSC incorporated into your ethos?
We have lots of children from Sri Lanka and India and quite a number of children from eastern Europe. Some of our pupils are Hindus and there is a big Hindu temple locally. We have embraced our local community and want to help the families as well as them helping us. We host a Polish School here on a Saturday that caters for 130 children and teaches Polish history and geography. It’s important that they know about their origins too.

We are part of a Comenius project with a school in Poland and one in Spain. The theme is ‘I am great’ and we have used inspirational figures such as Winston Churchill, The Queen and the Beatles. The children have pen pals and we’ve visited the different countries. This is our second and final year but we are applying again to be part of the new Erasmus Plus. It’s such a good experience seeing teaching and learning in a classroom in another country.

We consider that the example we set is very important. We realised that some of our families who were trying to use food banks locally were encountering problems. So we got permission to develop a hut attached to the school as a food bank. Our actions show we care and our pupils emulate that.

What advice would you give other schools?
Keep the lines of communication open. When I came to the school parents didn’t come past the gate. Now we have people on the playground; small issues can build up so we make sure we are out there to deal with them. Our newsletters are translated and reach out to the community, making sure that all groups have the information they need.

You have to earn good behaviour and everyone has to buy into the ethos. Our house system has really developed a collegiate approach with pupils mixing across year groups and having friendships with older and younger pupils.

Relationships are key. You have to get on with the children and having a sense of humour helps. Going into the staff room, relaxing and having a laugh with others in the same situation can make all the difference.
Webinar: Challenging conversations

In her upcoming webinar ABI CLAY explains what staff need to think about in order to effectively handle challenging conversations.

‘Children should be seen and not heard’. Thankfully, we’ve come a long way since this Victorian ideology was common place, but there is still a huge learning curve to get over before schools become the open and safe places they need to be.

The Prevent duty says ‘schools should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments.’

What does this safe space look like?

There has been some confusion over the words ‘safe space’, yet the guidance is clear. Schools don’t need to create a safe space, they need to be the safe space. This means the whole school environment, every classroom and every staff member need to be seen as available to pupils if they want to ask questions, challenge views and express opinions.

For staff this can be a daunting prospect. Fears might include ‘what if I say something incorrect?’ or ‘I don’t know the answer’. As with all of us, it’s impossible for you to know everything. We all pick up information from the news and extended research but we can’t be expected to be theological scholars with the answers at the tips of our fingers.

What can staff do to prepare for this situation?

Critical thinking skills are key for staff and for pupils. You should ask yourself whether their skills are as good as they could be. When a difficult question is asked, do you feel confident dissecting the topic? Do you have tactics up your sleeve to encourage the pupil to explain why they are expressing a particular view?

As for those fears mentioned earlier, you can’t know everything, so when a question is asked that you don’t feel comfortable answering, what do you do? Having the confidence to admit that you don’t know is one big step, and having the ability to do that without losing face to the class – make sure the environment in your class is open to admitting you don’t know. Taking responsibility for the conversation does fall to the class teacher as, whatever views are being expressed, if they are upsetting other pupils or are based on inaccuracies then intervening can stop the issue escalating.

Catch up

If you missed our Embedding SMSC & British Values conference in February, register for this webinar to hear Abi’s session on challenging conversations.

In her webinar on Thursday 10th March, consultant Abi Clay will examine whose responsibility it is to handle these challenging conversations, what skills they need and examples of what to do. She will also use some case studies to demonstrate how you could react in certain situations.

Register for the webinar at: my.optimus-education.com/webinar-challenging-conversations
How to safeguard your older students against new and ever evolving risks

Join us at the Safeguarding Teenagers conference, the only event specifically targeted around the common challenges you face when working to safeguard teenagers and older students.

"Well organised and targeted and a very good reminder/stimulus to get me to go back to school and disseminate to colleagues/update practice”
LEAD TEACHER OF CHILD PROTECTION, POOLE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

“Informative, useful and the best child protection training available”
CPO, EASINGWOLD SCHOOL

KEY BENEFITS

MENTAL HEALTH
Spotting signs and providing real support

OFSTED & DfE
Clarify expectations under new policies and increased duties

ONLINE
Sexting, catfishing, revenge porn – how to educate and resonate with pupils

Find out more at www.oeconferences.com/safeguardingteenagers

Unlimited CPD members attend free*

*Unlimited CPD members are entitled to book a place for one delegate per conference. Unlimited CPD members can purchase additional delegate places at a discount of 50% off the standard price. All conference places are subject to availability and bookings are taken on a first come, first served basis.
How to meet new expectations and tackle key challenges in 2016

Join us at our flagship event for SENCOs to ensure you are successfully managing change and crucially, continuing to support good outcomes for students with SEND.