Using dot marking in the classroom
Page 30
Delivering Statutory Relationships and Sex Education

Ensure your school is prepared and staff are confident in delivering age-appropriate RSE

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Dr Christian Jessen  
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Professor Jonathan Glazzard  
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Co-founder, Outspoken Sex Ed for Parents

Gillian Leno  
PSHE Lead, Queen Alexandra College/SENSRE

KEY BENEFITS

STATUTORY GUIDANCE  
Understand the new government guidance

CURRICULUM  
Build an age-appropriate curriculum

WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH  
Create and embed a whole-school approach to RSE
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**KEY BENEFITS**

**REDUCE STRESS**  
Manage stress and improve staff work-life balance

**SUPPORT STAFF**  
Develop staff wellbeing policies and promote whole-school engagement

**IMPROVE RETENTION**  
Build a sustainable programme for CPD and create a healthier workplace
Welcome to Optimus Education Insight

Dear Reader

‘Students need to focus on improving their own work, rather than using us as proofreaders’, commented conference chair Ian Warwick at last year’s more able event, in response to a question about how to encourage more independence from pupils. ‘Struggle is part of the learning process.’

Getting the right balance between support and challenge is a focus for our teaching and learning contributors this issue. From using a simple red dot to promote a ‘check this’ culture (see page 30) to developing a whole school strategy around self-reflection (page 34), they are seeking ways to improve metacognition and self-evaluation.

Self-evaluation isn’t just a skill for pupils. The autumn term is appraisal season in most schools, and we’ve been exploring how to make the most of the process from the point of view of both appraiser and appraisee (see pages 16-18). When it comes to what kind of school or trust people want to work in, it’s a supportive environment and access to professional development that matter most (see page 26).

With improving wellbeing a priority for many, Zoe Dale has been exploring what the new mental health lead role means for schools. Turn to page 44 to find out more.

Liz Worthen
Head of Content
Optimus Education

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INSIGHT

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Conference Calendar

Optimus Education’s one-day conferences bring school leaders and managers together, helping you stay up to date with new legislation, guidance and best practice in education. Find out what’s coming up in your focus area.

SEPTEMBER

Child Protection in Education
TUESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER, LONDON
TUESDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER, BRISTOL
THURSDAY, 4 OCTOBER, MANCHESTER
Clarify the latest safeguarding risks, remain legally compliant and ensure robust child protection procedures across your school.

Foundation Training Course: DPO for Schools
WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER, LONDON
A one-day training programme with Browne Jacobson LLP to provide your DPO with the skills and confidence they need to discharge their duties.

Supporting the Progress of the More Able
WEDNESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER, MANCHESTER
TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER, LONDON
Engage and motivate more able pupils across the whole school and ensure staff and parental understanding to support progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

OCTOBER

MATs Summit 2018
WEDNESDAY 10 - FRIDAY 12 OCTOBER, BRIGHTON
Designed exclusively for MAT leadership teams, this immersive event aims to provoke thought, inspire change and enable you to build your network nationally.

DELIVERING STATUTORY RSE
TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER, LONDON
Ensure your school is prepared and staff are confident in delivering age-appropriate RSE. Attend sessions focused on curriculum development and parental engagement.

NOVEMBER

Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools
WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER, LONDON
THURSDAY, 22 NOVEMBER, MANCHESTER
Gain strategies and resources to make a real difference to students affected by mental health difficulties.

GDPR for Schools
TUESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER, LONDON
THURSDAY, 17 JANUARY, MANCHESTER
Gain the latest guidance on the impact of GDPR and ensure your school remains compliant.

DECEMBER

Effective Financial Management in Schools
WEDNESDAY, 5 DECEMBER, LONDON
Gain efficient and creative ways to manage the challenges of long-term financial planning and overcome funding cuts.

JANUARY

Effective Operations of MATs
THURSDAY, 31 JANUARY, LONDON
Build efficient communication structures, centralise common services and maintain a robust financial process across your schools.

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 0845 450 6404.
What’s in this month’s Leadership and Governance section?

The start of the new school year usually involves some reflection of the year just gone. When it comes to appraisal meetings, it’s important to be prepared, whether you’re the appraiser or the appraisee. Turn to page 16 for tips on making your appraisal meeting a success. The appraisal process can help to identify and develop new leaders as part of succession planning. Victoria Clifford suggests ways to ensure a plan is in place for your chair of governors too, on page 14. Independent state school partnerships are not uncommon, but how are they set up and, crucially, how do you make sure they work for the benefit of everyone? Norwich School tell us about how they built links with local schools. Collaborative working and relationship building are part of any successful partnership, including those in a multi-academy trust. Josephine Smith offers 10 ways that subject leaders across a MAT can work together on page 10. And after a summer break, your member emails are back in your inbox every Monday!

Lisa Griffin, Content Lead

Contributors in this issue

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

Suzanne O’Connell has more than 25 years’ teaching experience, 11 years of which were as a junior school headteacher. She is currently a writer, editor and trainer.

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

Victoria Clifford is chair of governors at a primary school. She is a local leader of governance advising other boards and a mentor to future chairs of governing boards for National Governance Association.

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- Tier 5 sponsorship and independent schools: what to know
  oego.co/tier-5
- When is outstanding not good enough?
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Overcoming disadvantage: an ongoing journey

Disadvantaged champion VANESSA BURTON shares how reduced resources inspired a strategy rethink and more coherent provision for pupil premium pupils

When ‘pupil premium’ lead became part of my portfolio as an assistant headteacher, I initially played it safe – and rather missed the point. ‘Pupil premium’ refers to the money provided to close the gap for disadvantaged pupils, not the reason for the gap itself. Like many others, I focused on chasing the pennies and justifying how we were spending the grant. I wasn’t looking at the people enough, and the pennies didn’t always add up to the pounds. So, I decided to change our approach. A disclaimer: this is a work in progress! Our gap still fluctuates and there is still much work to be done, but this is where we’re going and how we’re getting there.

Our context
The Bishops’ Blue Coat is a comprehensive faith school in Chester, pulling pupils from a large catchment area. In our part of the country a deprivation gap exists which our school mirrors on a smaller scale. With 20% of our pupils being disadvantaged they remain the minority and as such, difference is amplified: socially, educationally and financially. With a smaller proportion of pupils, comes a smaller pot of money. Rethinking your approach requires a hard look at the facts, an identification of the barriers and a creative set of new strategies.

Identifying our gaps
Disadvantaged pupils are not a homogenous group. Every research piece, educational book, conference and working party agrees on this point. Yet it’s so easy to continue to act as if they are – even down to identifying those that are underachieving versus those that aren’t. It’s just too crude and basic. Once I started using the data in a more nuanced way to identify sub-groups and the pupils that needed help, the way forward became clearer, more manageable – and cheaper.

The most interesting piece of data that screamed ‘early intervention’ was the gap between disadvantaged boys and disadvantaged girls on their journey through KS3 to KS4. I was stunned when I discovered that the disadvantaged gender gap not only widened from Year 7 to Year 11 but occurred from cohort to cohort. Think boys’ progress is problematic? Compound that with being a disadvantaged boy and the picture is at once stark and clear.

Less money, more creativity
There were (and still are) bigger issues at play – issues that many schools face, especially those for whom the grant is not ringfenced. I battled with this for ages and as concrete resources began to trickle away (two of our intervention staff working with disadvantaged pupils in English and maths retired), I was forced to see how we could close the gap in more creative, strategic and holistic ways. Exit easy-to-measure strategies, enter a mosaic of strategies requiring hard and soft data alike. The disadvantaged strategy needed to dovetail into the school’s development plan for any momentum to be made and as such, our approach became more thematic and permeated into more areas of school life.

From leader to champion
The issue of responsibility was confronting me. It’s easy for schools to appoint a lead for disadvantaged pupils – but leading what? Leading the budget? Leading the intervention coordination? Leading the website compliance and report writing? Leading on data and its dissemination?

The first thing schools should do is swap the word ‘lead’ for ‘champion’. At this point the onus changes. Closing the gap happens when everyone in the entire school sees it as their responsibility. The champion’s job is to keep reminding them. ‘Everyone responsible’ means that we don’t just leap into action at the point when it matters because it’s externally measured. Key Stage 3, transition and reversing the impact of the ‘lost summers’ hold the answers, but identifying those key individuals, their needs and how we might tackle this in our classrooms is the starting point.

Our starting point can be summed up in the table opposite.
Changing culture
Changing culture to include everyone in closing the gap is not easy. But at its core are shared beliefs and values, participation, collaboration and a sense of ‘doing this together’.

We talked about disadvantage. What did it mean? Why did it happen? What would it lead to? Two resources I found particularly useful were Rita Pierson’s TED talk ‘Every kid needs a champion’ and an infographic entitled ‘10 good strategies to foster a growth mindset culture in your class’. Starting with the empathy angle is vital. Once people care, they act.

Participation is key to cultural change. Staff collaborated on compiling closing-the-gap strategies that work and those that need further exploration. This subsequently fed into staff briefings and became a dynamic closing-the-gap display in the staffroom. We created a disadvantaged working party in which we undertake action research in our classrooms to investigate strategies that work with specific disadvantaged pupils.

Valuable conversations arise when feeding back what works for individuals rather than groups. This now feeds into disadvantaged pupil passports, a centrally-held spreadsheet identifying key interests, talents, barriers and solutions for individual pupils.

‘The first thing schools should do is swap the word ‘lead’ for ‘champion’

Changing culture also extends to parents. The parents of disadvantaged pupils can be some of the hardest to reach. Starting with the DfE paper ‘Review of best practice in parental engagement’, we designed a programme called ‘Parent partnership: success means choices’.

As with many funded initiatives, we started with Year 11 but it has proved such a huge success that we will be mapping parent partnership events across the whole school, from Year 6 upwards. There are even awards out there that will guide and endorse.

All aboard
A disadvantaged lead can’t drive all this alone. To move forward in our mission to have everyone on board we need to do more work on growth mindset, high impact literacy across the curriculum, and address the lack of capacity and resources for intervention. All aboard means everyone:

- our grandparents to read with their grandchildren
- our disadvantaged pupils to run phonics sessions with the younger pupils
- our sixth formers to run intervention across all subjects (not just English and maths)
- our high ability pupils to be trained as peer mentors
- our form tutors to act in a much stronger loco parentis role.

So, start as a champion for disadvantaged pupils and continue fuelling the momentum towards a vision where no child is left behind socially, educationally or financially.

To read about Vanessa’s four priorities for action and data analysis recommendations, head online to my.optimus-education.com/overcoming-disadvantage-ongoing-journey

The pennies don’t always add up to the pounds

barriers to closing the gap

- pupils seen as a homogenous group.
- expenditure on concrete resources seen as being the best way to close the gap.
- money not being ringfenced.
- unsustainable resources or strategies.
- disproportionate responsibility on one SLT member or team.
- English and maths key focus.
- waiting until KS4 to close the gap.

solutions for closing the gap

- laser-sharp data analysis.
- quality first teaching, CPD and ‘the message’.
- acceptance that cheap or free strategies have more impact.
- find human resources in less obvious places, such as sixth formers, grandparents, the community, timetable surplus.
- tenacity and persistence in championing this group.
- early intervention for literacy and numeracy.
- parent partnership across key stages.
- invest in Key Stage 3 to raise aspiration, motivation and self-belief.

pupil premium review

Our experienced pupil premium consultants provide an extensive two-day review, including data analysis, stakeholder interviews and a detailed report. Find out more at oego.co/pupilpremiumreview
10 ways for MAT subject leaders to collaborate

School to school collaboration within a trust can save time and costs, reduce workload and provide CPD opportunities. JOSEPHINE SMITH describes 10 ways MAT schools can work together

Any subject leader, however experienced or successful, can benefit from working collaboratively with MAT counterparts. Those responsible for teaching and learning can support each other to secure the best possible outcomes for all young people studying in any of the Trust schools. This is especially true when MATs are formed, or enlarged, to support schools experiencing difficulties, or needing to improve student outcomes.

While this might initially sound like yet another demand on middle leaders’ time and, depending on the politics and circumstances of the MAT formation, a new set of potentially unpopular expectations from leadership, there is much to be gained from collaboration at middle leader level. Indeed, strategies to address staff wellbeing and teacher workload often refer to collaboration.

The proposals below come with a key to suggest which strategies:

• save time and workload (TS)
• save costs (£)
• support the provision of effective solutions to common problems subject leaders face (CP)
• promote high quality teaching and learning (T&L)
• provide CPD or training opportunities (CPD).

1. Planning for learning (TS, £, T&L, CPD)

The ‘Eliminating unnecessary workload around planning and teaching resources’ report by the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group urges school leaders to create space and time for colleagues to plan sequences of lessons together or to share out the workload of planning.

Your colleagues may already do this in larger departments but the more staff involved, the greater the sharing out of the work. Not only does this reduce the planning burden on individual staff, it also provides an excellent opportunity for creativity, discussion about what makes for productive planning for learning (rather than lesson planning), and provides consistency of experience for pupils across a department and across Trust schools.

There needs to be some quality control but that is the job of the subject leader: to lay out clear guidelines for planning and reviewing the planning for a sequence of lessons (perhaps with his/her counterpart at the other Trust schools) upon submission of schemes of work. The report suggests: ‘If planning is to be effective, schools should look to identify blocks of time to allow for proper collaborative planning, which offers excellent opportunities for professional development.’

2. Assessment standardisation and moderation (CP, CPD)

Given the amount of exam specification and curriculum change across all key stages, there has to be some comfort provided by collaboration when it comes to standardising each others’ assessment decisions.

Teachers are understandably nervous about judging, predicting or reporting grades or levels under the new syllabuses due to an early lack of available government or exam board guidance on what each grade looks like. Whether teachers need to standardise their non-examination assessment (NEA), get to grips with mock examination marking at GCSE or A-level or tackle internal SAT marking consistency, working across the Trust might help teachers feel confident about their assessment judgements.

3. Exams and impartial marking (TS, CP, CPD)

Some MATs are using collaborative working to design and schedule internal assessments. It avoids over-mirroring classroom teaching activities and can encourage teachers to look closely at specifications to set rigorous assessment tasks that are applicable to all pupils taking that specification (no matter who their teacher is or where they are studying).

A further step is for schools to mark the assessments of pupils from another school. This supports objective and impartial marking. For example, if they are marking the work of pupils they haven’t taught, teachers are more likely to mark the work that is in front of them, rather than reward the pupil’s potential. Of course, this will work best if partner schools have adopted the same exam specifications in each subject area.

4. NEA appeals (CP)

All secondary schools have grappled with new rules recently
on pupils’ right to appeal internally against the grade they are awarded in NEAs. By working with partner schools, and including this intention in your school’s NEA policy, you can gain a second opinion on a pupil’s work from colleagues without great additional cost.

5. Marking and workload (TS, CP, T&L, CPD)
Collaborative discussions amongst primary and secondary colleagues in a similar subject area, or indeed across subjects, could be beneficial to share time-saving ideas, swap marking templates and proforma or simply debate what good assessment and feedback looks like with a subject focus.

A school in our Trust, for example, is part of the EEF’s Flash-Marking project and will share the national findings with colleagues across the Trust.

6. Exam board training (£, CPD)
Clubbing together to access expensive exam board training is not a new idea but it becomes much more manageable across a Trust where leaders want to maximise a shrinking CPD budget.

Even where training is cost free it’s good to have a wider group of colleagues to discuss training ideas with, especially if that discussion is around implementing the advice in similar school settings.

7. Software and resources (TS, £, CP)
The same can be applied to collaborative invitations to review new resources or attend software demonstrations. We found that by inviting partner schools to attend demonstrations of software that we thought might address a need in our school, our partner school colleagues already had solutions or resources that they were prepared to share at no cost. (Note: before sharing software across schools, remember to check the terms of your licence.)

8. Transition (T&L, CPD)
Any good secondary school will have its pastoral transition programmes well established, but working as part of a MAT lends itself to opportunities for primary and secondary colleagues to share an understanding of the transition in learning from Year 6 to 7.

This is particularly important given the changes to the primary curriculum. A cross-phase MAT partnership means that secondary teachers have a ready-prepared CPD resource to make the most of in the form of their primary colleagues.

In return, secondary schools offer subject specialists who can support more able programmes in the primaries or offer training to primary colleagues to promote subject confidence.

9. More able and SEND provision (TS, T&L, CPD)
Each school in the MAT will have its own strengths and areas for development. Often existing strengths are the result of staff having developed skills to meet the contextual needs of the school (supporting pupil premium learners or strategies to challenge more able pupils, for example).

These strengths can be shared even if that simply means one set of colleagues describing what they do (and being given the forum, perhaps Teach-Meet style, to do so). Have staff describe what may seem obvious to them about their day-to-day role or successful strategies they systematically employ. Don’t underestimate the power of giving colleagues a chance simply to hear other colleagues talk about specific roles and provide the chance for follow-up debate and questions.

10. ITT collaboration (CP, T&L, CPD)
One of the most positive outcomes for our Trust has been the collaboration surrounding trainee teachers. Rather than competing with local schools to recruit the best candidates, we are working together to provide opportunities for ITT candidates to undertake different placements in schools across the Trust.

As a result, we can compare notes on possible candidates for staff vacancies, look out for opportunities in MAT schools to recruit the best and even ‘share’ candidates, employing them as Trust employees based across nearby schools if we don’t need them full-time in one school.

Note: This article assumes that there are at least two secondary schools in the MAT, that there are primary partner schools and that the leadership teams in each school plan for the use of some of the schools’ designated meeting times to facilitate collaborative working.
Independent state school partnerships: case study

Evidence of Norwich School in partnership with the state sector to improve education for everyone is clear to see in their ‘Reaching Out’ publication. Touching on almost every curriculum area, they have engaged with a range of community projects.

For example, Norwich School hosts an annual book festival with 3,600 pupils from across Norfolk taking part since the event began. The school also provides masterclasses in maths and languages, a chorister event and a sports outreach programme, and runs a very popular summer school which has helped more than 1,500 pupils receive advice about access to higher education.

There is a commitment to involvement with the local community and sixth formers are expected to help with community projects. In 2016/2017, over 300 Norwich school sixth formers helped out in the local community and volunteered for 7,000 hours between them.

Norwich School supports teacher training and professional development and offers placements for PGCE students. Last year it provided bursarial support for 74 pupils and is an open exam centre, sharing facilities with others.

Outreach
Norica Hill was recently appointed as assistant headteacher in charge of outreach. Her appointment builds on work that has already been done over the years to make the school accessible and to share the privileges that they have.

'We believe that the best projects are two-way enterprises,' headmaster Mr. Griffiths writes in the ‘Reaching Out’ publication. ‘Our pupils, alumni, parents and teachers all benefit from being involved with people and projects outside Norwich School. We obviously hope that what we do is helpful, but we are keen to help in part because we know that we learn and grow greatly in the process, too.'

Norica is clearly supported by other staff in the school. ‘I ask people to let me know if there is a project they’re starting and think there might be an opportunity to involve other schools.’

The format is often similar. Norwich School has an idea for an activity or event and then considers who might benefit from it.

Norica doesn’t see outreach as too much additional effort. ‘If we are intending to run something it’s just a case of thinking if other children might join in. We open it up. We’re keen to share our resources and the facilities that we have,’ says Norica.

‘We let local schools know when we are planning something that we think they might be interested in.’ Norica makes it sound simple. However, it has taken time to develop the links and to break down barriers.

Building relationships
Schools didn’t always respond but...
'The links state schools have can also benefit Norwich School'

Increasingly Nicola can see a change in attitude and a greater enthusiasm for partnership working. 'I think state schools are increasingly receptive to our invitations. Time, however, is one barrier that we do sometimes find working against the partnership.'

Another potential barrier has been transport. 'We are lucky to have our own buses and we've found that offering to bring students here has meant a greater take up of partnership opportunities. The cost of buses can be prohibitive even when the event itself is free,' says Nicola.

On some occasions, the links state schools have can also benefit Norwich School. 'It was wonderful to see students from different schools singing together during the choristers outreach event. We are seeing a move towards greater reciprocation,' says Nicola. 'If they get a speaker in we are now being invited too.'

Sharing facilities

Some of the opportunities that are offered would be out of the scope of neighbouring schools without Norwich School's support, such as when Natasha Devon led a day of interactive discussion about mental health. 500 students from across Norfolk were able to benefit from the opportunity to take part in the event, fronted by the Self-Esteem Team.

'Natasha Devon is highly regarded,' explains Nicola, 'and we decided that after she came to Norwich this would be something that would be good to open up to other local schools too. We just tweeted the opportunity and had a very good take up.'

Another recent example was the 'Response' art exhibition. Four state schools joined Norwich School in visiting three exhibitions and then began projects in response to one or more of them. Norwich School has its own Crypt gallery which provided the perfect setting for students' work. 'What was particularly pleasing was how much the students were able to appreciate each other's work,' says Nicola, 'and not just that of the students at their own school.'

Improving local education

This reciprocity has been particularly beneficial when it comes to teacher training. 'I worked in state schools prior to coming to Norwich School,' says Nicola. 'It's beneficial for trainee teachers to also spend time in state schools. With our partnerships we can now offer this.'

The school is also the regional centre for professional development for NQTs across Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and hosts termly training days for them. 'The support for teacher development is particularly beneficial as Norwich is one of the opportunity areas targeted by the DfE. 'We are part of regular meetings that can help to allocate opportunities to the right schools,' explains Nicola. 'Now we can approach the Norwich group of schools to find out if there is one that would particularly benefit from something that we are running or hosting. If you are not careful there can be a tendency for the same schools to engage.'

Taking up opportunities

The school has just taken part in Norwich's first Techathon. In this case, a company approached them to host the event due to their range of facilities. This is an example of where Norwich might be contacted by others first. 'We plan many of our activities,' says Nicola, 'but sometimes it's a case of reacting and taking up opportunities ourselves when they are presented.'

It's an impressive catalogue of partnerships and one that has taken years to build. However, for those who are in the early stages of such collaborative working, the outreach that Norwich School has established must be an inspiration.

You can access Norwich School's 'Reaching Out' publication at www.schoolstogether.org/media/5074/reaching-out.pdf.
Chair of governors succession planning

Creating a succession plan for the governing board and chair ensures the continuity of strong governance. VICTORIA CLIFFORD suggests ways to develop governor skills

Have you ever wondered ‘Who will chair our board if the chair has to leave unexpectedly?’

Too often boards know that this is something we should plan for, but we imagine it might be tricky to negotiate and, anyway, it isn’t pressing, so we can postpone it again… and again.

We ask ourselves, ‘What would be the problem of sorting it out when the old chair leaves?’

Why succession plan?

Leaving it until then can lead to no one feeling confident enough to step up to be chair, and a rudderless board can lead fairly swiftly to a rudderless school. One school I know had only one obvious candidate to take over, who became ill and had to resign shortly after assuming the chair. They then had no one else.

Another school had a long-serving and very hard-working chair, but she did everything herself. When she left, the other governors were not skilled or confident enough to take over straight away, nor had they built the necessary professional relationships.

The National Governance Association (NGA) recommends starting to plan your successor as soon as possible, and no later than the third or fourth year of a six-year term of office. However committed we might be, we still might have to leave unexpectedly, but a succession plan protects the school, and makes it resilient in the face of the unexpected.

Skills audit

It’s good to prepare more than one person who could take over, ideally from those already on the board. Chairs broadly know the skills of their board, and conducting a skills audit can be a useful exercise (see my.optimus-education.com/governor-skills-audit for an example). I have been pleasantly surprised by audits which reveal governor skills or experiences of which I wasn’t aware.

Regular skills audits are also useful for spotting chairing talent, or indeed chairing skills gaps, which you can then meet through a combination of training, mentoring, providing development opportunities or recruiting.

Training

Require all governors to take basic training, and appreciate publicly any additional training sessions they take. Give a boost to their confidence by encouraging them to share more specialised training with the whole board. Even the longest serving governors do not stop learning, and should set a good example by sharing information and questioning during meetings so that the board, as well as the school, is a learning community.

Before taking over, a chair should ideally have training in school performance measures, school budgets, safeguarding in schools and a course in leading governance.

Mentoring

When I started governing, I had no mentor or induction programme, felt lost among the jargon of education and alienated by the formal, humorless committee proceedings. As a chair now myself, I try to avoid this by mentoring all new governors. Start with a welcoming induction pack of key documents and meet the new governors with the headteacher, perhaps including a tour of the school. Then follow up by being available to answer any queries and offer support and private and public appreciation of their contributions to the board.

When a governor leaves or goes the extra mile for the board, recognise their achievements for the board in a meeting. It not only encourages them but helps others to value their own role, and perhaps aspire to more responsibility.

Development opportunities

Give future chairs development opportunities by encouraging them to take on delegated tasks and by offering them support and training for the role. This gives them new skills and builds confidence.

You could start them off as a governor with special
responsibility for an aspect of the board’s work, such as safeguarding or SEND, or serving on a panel. Next you could encourage them to chair a committee or panel, and then perhaps become vice chair, or even co-chair with you. Ideally all committee chairs should have the potential to become chair, so the school will have several options when the chair steps down.

For some future chairs, it could take two or so years to gain enough confidence and experience to become chair, but for others, who have more skills and experience, it will take a shorter time.

**Recruiting**

If you don’t have anyone on the board with the skills to take over from you, you can recruit those from outside current governors with chairing skills, or with the potential to develop them.

Academy Ambassadors and the NGA’s Inspiring Governance and Future Chairs programmes all match people volunteering to be governors with appropriate schools. Local businesses can regard chairing a school board as valuable development experience for their employees. Equally they may offer you staff with chairing skills as part of their commitment to good community relations.

**Make the successor’s job attractive**

If the job of chair looks unappealing, no one will want to do it. Make it look manageable, both in terms of time required and the demands of chairing. Don’t be too hard an act to follow!

For future chairs, model enjoying meetings and making them good-humored, as leading volunteers can be different to leading people at work. Create a cooperative team and have some fun; you could perhaps serve refreshments or celebrate governors’ success with some bubbles, or have an away day or whole board training. Good topics to consider could be evaluating the governing body or setting whole-school strategy.

Leave a board that functions well for your successor. According to the current governance handbook, an efficient board should:

‘Ensure clear separation between strategic non-executive oversight and operational executive leadership which is supported by positive relationships that encourage a professional culture and ethos across the organisation.’

You can achieve this by having a committee structure that works efficiently and a strong clerk. It also helps to set ground rules, so adopt a code of conduct with recommended terms of office. The NGA recommend two four-year terms as a maximum, with six years for a chair.

It would also be good to indicate in advance your personal limit for your own term of office. This ensures the board is refreshed and re-invigorated with a steady flow of new governors, including a new chair.

If you can, deal with any problems on the board and major challenges for the school before stepping down. It’s hard enough to be a new chair without problems inherited from the past!

**Use regular skills audits to spot chairing talent, as well as identify chairing skills gaps**

Give future chairs development opportunities by delegating tasks
Appraisal conversations: advice and tips

What makes a successful appraisal meeting? JOSEPHINE SMITH offers guidance to help appraisees and appraisers prepare for the meeting.

In an appraisal meeting, the appraisee should feel listened to, genuinely recognised for successes and offered practical support to achieve any other performance expectations. On the appraisee’s part it’s all about seeing the appraisal conversations as an important part of their professional development and a chance to seek genuine support when things are proving difficult.

ADVICE FOR APPRAISEES

Rather than see an appraisal meeting as a hoop-jumping exercise, remember it might be a necessary conversation to formalise your pay progression (which isn’t automatic). It’s also a good opportunity to impress upon your line manager why you are a real asset to the team and someone who contributes to the overall success of the school and pupils.

Sometimes it takes a one-to-one conversation for a line manager to be aware of what you are most proud of. I remember finding it strange that my headteacher was complimentary about a revision programme I’d put together for the Easter holidays but didn’t really commend the day to day success of my teaching that produced great results for my Year 11s.

It’s sometimes the case that the one-off public successes are recognised more than the daily grind. Spend time preparing a list of different aspects of your work that you think have gone well throughout the year and don’t be afraid to point them out.

‘Your appraisal review and target setting meeting isn’t a capability interview or part of the capability process’

Career progression

The appraisal conversation is a good time to discuss your career progression. Your line manager should want to support your professional development but you need to have a clear idea about what kind of support you want, or how they can help you. Think about this before the meeting and maybe even flag the conversation so the time you have is well spent and your appraiser has time to think of some useful suggestions before they meet you.

Remember your appraisal isn’t simply designed to see whether you have met three or four distinct targets. It’s about whether you are working within the teacher standards at the point on the pay scale you are at or hope to move to.

Be prepared to give examples (though you shouldn’t be asked for a portfolio of evidence) of how you are doing this. This is particularly important if you are hoping for progression to the UPS or equivalent in your school. Read the school policy on this beforehand; it will be clear about what you need to demonstrate.

Having a difficult conversation

If you know that you haven’t met your appraisal targets or that there are issues for you in meeting the teacher standards, it is better to be honest and transparent about why this might be, rather than defensive. Whatever the reasons, you need to trust and value the support of your appraiser if things are to improve. If you think this isn’t the case or you aren’t going to get the support you think you need, talk to someone.

You need to prepare for the meeting by forcing yourself to question why your performance hasn’t been as expected. Make notes (your school system may require you to do this anyway in preparation) which list any mitigating circumstances that were in your opinion:

a) outside of your control
b) within your control.

Use available information (e.g. lesson observation feedback, quality assurance findings, minutes from line management meetings, pupil voice records or attainment and progress data) so that any discussions are built on evidence and not

Top tips

- Don’t be bashful about celebrating your successes.
- Point out what you’re most proud of if it isn’t brought up by your appraiser.
- Use the opportunity to discuss your career progression or aspirations.
- Read up on your school’s policy on pay progression and what you do (and don’t) need to do.
supposition.

Your appraisal review and target setting meeting isn’t a capability interview or part of the capability process. If you are going to be asked to make significant improvements to your performance then the school should first provide an informal support package for you that clearly lays out support offered, expectations and timeframes.

The suspension of the appraisal process and the commencement of formal support and a capability process is the next step. This should reassure you that the appraisal process is genuinely intended to be a vehicle for development.

Use the appraisal discussion to seek support and think about what it is that would really make a difference and help you develop.

**ADVICE FOR APPRAISERS**

Appraisal conversations need to be focused and professional (rather than personal) in tone. There shouldn’t be any nasty surprises at an appraisal conversation. Areas of concern should already have been raised in a timely manner, while school systems such as attainment and progress tracking, quality assurance findings and subject meetings will have prompted conversations when necessary.

**When everything is going well**

Praise specifics rather than generalities using the language of the appraisal targets, teacher standards or by pointing to the evidence of pupil outcomes. Use phrases such as the below.

- ‘I really want to thank you for your contribution to the school/team aims of [X] by [X]. I’d like to add my own thanks as your line manager for making my life all the easier/more enjoyable because………..’

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**Top tips**

- Being well prepared avoids defensiveness.
- Gather your facts. Your conversation should be built on evidence not anecdote.
- This isn’t a capability interview so use the discussion to seek support and think about what it is that would really make a difference and help you develop in your role.
- Consider submitting your thinking/evidence/agenda to your appraiser beforehand to avoid surprises at the meeting.

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*Appraisal conversations are an important part of professional development and a time to celebrate your successes*
Appraisal conversations: advice and tips continued...

- "The pupils are really lucky to have you as their teacher because you [X]..." (cite particular strengths and successes).

Real quotes, whether they are from lesson observation feedback, subject reviews or quality assurance reports, can add weight to your compliments.

I recommend not starting a conversation by asking the appraisee how they think it’s going. That makes it sound like you’re nervous of committing to a view yourself. You could start by asking your colleague what they are most proud of this year or what they see as their biggest success. I’ve found this leads to some interesting answers and gives you real insight into the values and professional pride of a colleague that you might not have guessed at.

For example, I was surprised by a drama teacher I appraised who worked tirelessly on school productions. I focused on thanking her for all the time she gave to these. She cited as her proudest achievement not these public events but their biggest success. I’ve found this leads to some interesting answers and gives you real insight into the values and professional pride of a colleague that you might not have guessed at.

I hadn’t planned to comment on that at appraisal because the small number of these pupils made them rather unnoticeable on whole-school tracking data and they hadn’t been a focus for her.

Instead of suggesting they work on her less able GCSE drama pupils in years 10 and 11. For her that was her real success. She cited as her proudest achievement not these public events but their biggest success. I’ve found this leads to some interesting answers and gives you real insight into the values and professional pride of a colleague that you might not have guessed at.

I hadn’t planned to comment on that at appraisal because the small number of these pupils made them rather unnoticeable on whole-school tracking data and they hadn’t been a focus for her.

If all is going well you may need to avoid having a bored colleague on your hands who might relish some professional stretch and challenge. Take the opportunity to ask about their aspirations and see what you can do to facilitate them.

**Have a difficult conversation**

The appraisal meeting isn’t the place or time you should first be raising concerns. Your job is to explore what actions need taking by a colleague or what support needs providing to achieve the outcomes laid out in their targets.

Difficult conversations should be based on facts and evidence rather than anecdote and supposition. Go into the meeting with evidence such as lesson observation feedback, quality assurance findings, minutes from line management meetings, pupil voice records or attainment and progress data.

If your school systems mean that this information is not available to you your job is made much harder. Raise this with your line manager if that is the case. As an appraiser you need the tools to be able to deal with suggestions of underperformance in a professional way.

Just as with a pupil, don’t criticise a colleague personally. It’s their professional behaviours that need adjusting, not their personality. Instead of suggesting they can’t (capability) or won’t (disciplinary) live up to reasonable professional expectations, use the following kind of language.

- ‘I can make some suggestions but what do you think you can change about the way you are doing [X] to meet the expectation that [X]?’
- ‘What reasonable support do you feel you need to [X]?’

You may feel that this language is more akin to coaching than appraisal but it’s helpful in suggesting that planned and supportive action rather than chastisement or conversely, tea and sympathy, is the way forward. If things get heated you’ll need to resort to the protection of the school’s appraisal policy.

Top tips
- Celebrate good news. It’s not often we get the chance one on one.
- Be professionally complimentary, not personally patronising.
- Praise professional growth, development and progress, not just continued good practice.
- Use the conversation to find out about the appraisee’s aspirations. They could be a further asset to your area that you hadn’t realised.

Performance management resources

Head online for lots more resources to aid the performance management and appraisal process, including how to use 360 reviews. 360 reviews set clear expectations of staff and align them with school vision and values. Search for ‘360 review’ and gain access to further information and example questions for a 360 review meeting.
What’s in this month’s School Business Management section?

This academic year sees school business professionals navigating ever choppier waters. Managing pay awards in the face of increasing budget deficits is just one of many challenges. David Weston has written for us about what it means to be an ‘employer of choice’ – and ways to do it that don’t necessarily incur cost. Want to know what matters most to your staff when it comes to retention benefits? A survey could be a useful tool, but first read wellbeing adviser Julia Watson’s top tips (see page 25). With the Home Office recognising teaching as a shortage occupation, some schools are looking overseas to solve recruitment problems. Lawyer Julie Moktadir provides advice on page 28 regarding the process of obtaining a sponsorship licence. Sounds daunting? Turn overleaf for Nickii Messer’s guide to project management essentials, and gain confidence in your ability to tackle new tasks – such as setting up an alumni network. Independent schools have long made use of ‘old boy’ networks, and state schools are catching on to the opportunity. Justin Smith and Nazli Hussein give guidance on generating and maximising donations.

Liz Worthen, Head of Content

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School business project management: a guide

Being able to plan and manage a project is an essential skill for school business managers and leaders. Nickii Messer provides a step by step guide to the basics.

A project is something intrinsically different from the day job. It has a beginning, middle and end. There should be something tangibly different – and better – at the end of it. Projects come in all shapes and sizes from long term building projects and ‘quick fix’ changes to systems and processes. For example:

- repainting the staffroom or school corridors
- procuring a new photocopier
- reviewing support staff structure
- introducing support staff performance management.

Viewing these as projects allows you to make use of different planning and management tools to help determine what needs to be achieved, minimise problems and maximise successful outcomes.

Planning projects brings to mind the old adage: ‘If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail’ (Benjamin Franklin). The savvy project manager will always invest time and effort in the planning stages to avoid wasting frustrating amounts of time putting it all right further down the line.

Taking ‘introducing support staff performance management’ as an example project, here are some easily accessible project planning and management techniques to get started.

**Step 1: Establish need**

Establishing need is the first step in project planning. Your potential project might seem a good idea to you, but does it reflect the school’s current priorities? Perhaps there are more pressing matters to be dealt with first. Keeping abreast of school improvement priorities, and maintaining a school business management improvement plan to reflect these, will help highlight priorities for action.

Analysis is a great aid to objectivity. A simple analysis tool for project managers is a SWOT: an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This is especially useful in early planning stages, and helps formulate an objective view of the need, benefits and threats which might face the project.

Analysis such as SWOT helps clarify whether the project is worth going ahead with. It can also provide a more compelling case to take to the headteacher and/or governors for approval.

In the example (see above), strengths and opportunities outweigh weaknesses and threats, and the analysis helps demonstrate awareness of potential obstacles to overcome.

**Step 2: Acknowledge change**

Staff resistance to change is a key threat identified in the above SWOT, and may be the case for many projects. Taking appropriate action to mitigate risks associated with resistance should be part of the project management process. In the case of introducing support staff performance, resistance to change may be centred on fear, so these fears will need to be dealt with.

Invest time to get staff on board from the outset; keep them in the loop and recognise and respond to their fears. Clearly articulate what you are trying to achieve, and why it is important, to them and the school.

**Step 3: Determine objectives**

Identifying project objectives is as important as determining need. Project managers must be able to describe what the project aims to achieve. The wellbeing and life chances of the children should ultimately be improved by any project paid for by school funds, so always include them in objectives.

For an ‘introducing support staff performance management’ example SWOT analysis for ‘introducing support staff performance management’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Framework to ascertain training needs</td>
<td>• Line managers not trained in performance management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure all staff working at optimum level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improve retention of staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Equality across all staff</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Coherent procedures for staff improvement</td>
<td>• Staff resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased awareness of whole school context</td>
<td>• Line managers resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Higher quality of service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example SWOT analysis for ‘introducing support staff performance management’
Work with others to ascertain objectives. This will also encourage better understanding – and buy in – from those impacted by the project.

To measure project success, objectives need to be revisited on completion of the project. Agree from the start, not only what these objectives are, but how they will be measured and any starting point measurements. The two main categories of measurement are quantitative (involving numbers) and qualitative (measuring quality; often taking feelings into account).

For example: for the objective ‘improve the quality of support for teaching and learning’, you might use a questionnaire to gain a judgement on the quality of support before the project, and again after project completion.

Step 4: Consult

The Cambridge Dictionary defines consultation as ‘the process of discussing something with someone in order to get their advice or opinion about it’. This describes your consultative role within the context of project planning. While this may be your project, in school it will very quickly become everybody else’s business! Invest time to discuss the project with as many members of staff, governors, parents, even pupils, as appropriate. Describe what you aim to achieve, and why.

Listening to understand, not just to reply, is a key skill for any leader. Listen to understand how people feel about the project, what concerns they may have, and what ‘advice or opinions’ they might offer. Meaningful, respectful, consultation can be an invaluable way to get vital support and buy in.

Step 5: Plan

Planning tools are essential to project success. SBMs invariably report that their most useful planning tool is the Gantt chart. Many are fearful to use it for the first time, but it doesn’t have to be complicated. The chart is simply a tool which plots what needs doing and when. Crucially, it identifies where conflicts between different operations may lie.

Gantt chart templates are available, but you can use a simple Excel spreadsheet instead. Working backwards often works best when planning timescales. Identify when the project must be completed by, then work back, allowing ‘slippage’ or contingency time here and there (but don’t let others know there is room for manoeuvre!).

Step 6: Lead and manage

Leadership and management of the project will be more straightforward if the planning ground work has been done. However, the more complex the project, the more of your time (and attention) it will take, so be prepared for this.

The Gantt chart will repay time invested in it. Note that tasks and dates in the Gantt chart are not set in stone. Just as with any journey, there are likely to be delays and diversions. To stay in control, monitor progress against this chart and move things around as and when necessary. Treat your project like a budget, only the currency here is time.

Step 7: Stay focused

Try not to get precious about your project. Managing a project, especially one you have invested a lot of your time and effort in, can become very personal. But remember: this is not your project, it belongs to the school.

If things start to go wrong, or others seem to take over, ask yourself, what is the worst that can happen? How much does it really matter? Setting objectives in the planning stage provides a clear framework to keep the project on track. They provide focus on the absolute non-negotiables. Projects invariably get messy; keep a clear head and your eye on the target, especially when diversions appear. Invest time in the things that really count.

Step 8: Reflect and evaluate

Take time to reflect on what went well during the project, especially how well the objectives were met, and whether there were any unexpected ‘wins’ too. What might have made the project more successful?

Reflect also on your own learning. Review which tools and techniques you used, how useful they were, and how you might improve their use for future projects. What have you learned about yourself as a planner, manager, and leader?
Alumni fundraising

What role can your alumni play in fundraising? **JUSTIN SMITH** suggests ways to engage former students and utilise them in your fundraising strategy

Independent schools in the UK raised over £130m from donations in 2017, up from just £50m 10 years previously. It isn’t just mainstream education that’s experiencing this rise: philanthropic donations to UK universities have exceeded £1bn a year for the first time, according to the latest annual survey of charitable giving by Ross-CASE.

A Future First survey found 30% of state school alumni questioned would be willing to donate to their former schools if asked, yet only 1% had done so. The charity advises state schools to learn from private schools, which educate only 7% of students yet raise £130m annually in private donations.

The impact of these donations is significant and their area of support diverse. For example, the co-educational day school Norwich School, has introduced a discretional ‘Headmasters fund for greatest need’, designed to support students who, through no fault of their own, have fallen on hard times and whose families require a little extra financial help.

Their ‘Facilities fund’ asks for alumni support to develop new buildings and help maintain their historic, medieval buildings. Abingdon School in Oxford uses its alumni donations to support professional development, previously funding work experience, internship placements, vocational and professional training courses.

Motivation and impact

There is an emotive link between former students and their school, but the key to converting a prospect into an active donor is to develop a sense of emotional buy-in. There will be numerous motivators behind alumni donations such as a sense of duty, nostalgia, a need for recognition or purely out of genuine altruism.

Whatever the motivator, a potential donor should rationalise and frame their donation, so it best satisfies their own needs. This is where the school needs to develop a series of campaigns and mechanisms to appeal to a range of alumni.

Wymondham College, for example, had a long-standing desire to replace a dated cricket pavilion and establish a cricket coaching academy. They developed a strong narrative and forged links with local clubs and the regional cricket board before inviting former cricketing students for a reunion.

The school encouraged donors by illustrating precisely how each donation would be spent: e.g. £500 would buy 20 hours of professional coaching. Mechanisms were put in place to facilitate this such as online gift aid forms and donations directly via the school website. Over £50,000 was donated and the College now has its first girls cricket team, a fledgling, self-funded coaching academy and plans for a community multi-sports pavilion.

The model is being replicated for other sports at the College, with a ‘call to action’ to former students who had an active interest in specific sports.

Strategy

The best way to avoid ineffective scattergun approaches to school fundraising is to develop a coherent plan. You’ll need to consider all the parts of an effective fundraising plan.

- Executive summary: at a glance, the purpose of your strategy.
- Situational analysis: use SWOT and GAP Analysis to assess context.
- Planning: operational/business and strategic.
- Programme: themes, actions and timescales re how alumni can contribute to your vision.
- Resources and budget: what is needed.
- Measure and reflection: what works and why.

Good alumni relations programmes can ignite the passion that alumni have for the school, encourage them to get involved, and ultimately donate.

Good leadership is required to deliver effective strategy and an active and engaged senior leadership is integral to fundraising success. The IDPE Benchmarking Report 2016 found that:

- in schools raising £500,000 or more the headteacher was actively involved in championing the schools’ vision and case for support, meeting prospects and thanking donors
- in schools raising more than £1 million, all development directors reported to the headteacher.

The best way for senior leadership to support fundraising is to...
be visible, to promote and guide the school’s strategy and to be involved in asking key prospects.

**Alumni engagement**

It’s worth investing in technology to help support the alumni function. Prospect searching, wealth screening and other analytical tools provide the raw data to help with the targeting of potential donors.

Alumni management software provides users with branded communications platforms to help seek out and engage with potential donors. Capturing student data before they leave is critical, particularly in terms of their interests and gauging their level of potential future involvement.

The IDPE report also indicates that there is a direct correlation between the more schools invest in development and the amount of philanthropic income raised.

One way of raising aspiration and igniting engagement is to recruit former students as volunteer role models to whom current students can relate. With pressures on schools to oversee and provide their own careers guidance programmes, without additional funding, schools can use former students’ real-world expertise.

Ultimately, all the technology in the world will not compensate for the lack of an emotive and engaging story. Project narrative is king when it comes to converting prospects into donors as they want to feel like part of the team.

**Maximising social media**

Digital marketing expert, Alta Justus (thevirtualmarketer.co.uk), suggests that communicating with alumni on social media needs to be treated differently to communicating with current students.

It’s more than likely that the school will be leading the initiative and reaching out first, so it’s important to provide good reasons as to why these cohorts of alumni should follow you on social media.

1. Make it simple for alumni to relate by creating a social account that’s specific for them. If resources are tight, enlist the help of some trusted past students.
2. Provide your alumni with valuable resources. Include links to CV building tools, job boards, further education advice and career blogs. Give them ongoing support and a reason to keep coming back.
3. Appeal to their sentimental side. Posting images and videos from the past can trigger strong nostalgic emotions and encourage engagement. ‘Name the teacher/building/year’ is a great way to get the conversation rolling.
4. Regularly showcase past alumni, but don’t just focus on the outwardly ‘successful’ ones. Look to those that are making contributions to the community or giving back in other ways as well. Make everyone feel welcome.
5. Create a hashtag for school leavers to share their favourite photos from their year. You can easily turn those photos into a timeline video using a tool such as Filmora to further engage and build your followers.
6. Facebook is a great platform for promoting alumni events. It builds interest by showcasing attendees, with friends notified as well, helping to spread the word.
7. Make your social conversations two-way. Take the time to engage and respond to your audience as well as encourage conversation among followers.

**Shared vision**

Start small and identify a goal on your income generation plan that can become a shared vision. Develop a narrative that clearly defines the opportunities and the impact donations can make, however small they may be.

Everyone involved will want to feel they have played a part, so demonstrating what can be achieved with specific donation sums can be very effective. One or two alumni can become a driving force, ambassadors attracting others and the effect can snowball.

After all, who better to lead the charge on school fundraising than those with a story to tell.

**GDPR for Schools**

With press interest in the GDPR still strong and the public becoming more aware of their rights, schools need to be at the top of their game to avoid referral to the ICO. Can you evidence that new procedures to safeguard pupil data have been embedded throughout your school or MAT? Attend our first conference dedicated to the needs of school data protection officers. Find more details at eego.co/GDPR_2018
Managing donations for maximum value

Claiming Gift Aid increases the value of donations by 25%. NAZLI HUSSEIN explains how it works for schools and what finance managers and bursars need to do.

**Donations are usually** viewed as a one off, or regularly provided, sum of money. The value of a donation can be increased if a registered charity is accepting and processing the donation, as the donor can be asked to ‘Gift Aid’ their donation. This can add 25 per cent (25p for every £1 donated) at no extra cost to the donor or the charity. This is because the government will give back to the charity the income tax which the donor has already paid on their donation.

To be a charity, an organisation must have only charitable purposes that are for the public benefit. Advancing education can be a charitable purpose, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011, provided it is for the public benefit.

Depending on the type of school, some are automatically seen as accepted and registered charities, but some are exempt. In the case of exempt charities, the ‘school’ is the method of advancing education as the charitable activity of the governing body, but the school is not an entity in itself and so in this case an independent charitable organisation must be set up to operate on behalf of the school.

While many donations made to school charities are eligible for Gift Aid, it often goes unclaimed as school charities are unaware of what they can claim or may feel Gift Aid is too complicated. Gift Aid provides an additional source of income that can be used for school development and school improvement.

**What can Gift Aid be claimed on?**

To qualify for Gift Aid, donations must be gifts of money made by an individual UK taxpayer to the school or charitable organisation. The donations must be outright gifts where there is no benefit to the individual in return. It cannot be used in exchange for services, although a charity may sell goods on behalf of the donor who may then donate the proceeds to the school or charitable organisation.

Gift Aid also only applies to donations received from individuals and it cannot be claimed on grants from government departments, local authorities or any other body. Donations made by companies are not eligible for the Gift Aid scheme as the companies may be able to directly claim tax relief.

**Declaration forms**

For the school or charitable organisation to claim Gift Aid it is essential that the donor has supplied a Gift Aid declaration form (templates can be downloaded from www.gov.uk). This is their confirmation that they have paid, or will pay, enough income or capital gains tax to cover the amount of Gift Aid the charity will reclaim from HMRC.

Hard or online copies of records must be kept for a period of six years, proving the Gift Aid claims submitted are valid, and that every donation which Gift Aid has been claimed against can be traced back to an identifiable donor, who has signed a valid Gift Aid declaration.

If HMRC’s auditor finds mistakes with your Gift Aid claim, your school may have to repay some of the Gift Aid claimed. The auditor will explain what the errors are, how to correct them if possible and how to avoid them in future.

Gift Aid provides an additional source of income that can be used for school development and school improvement

**Checks and audits**

Be aware that sometimes the HMRC can carry out checks without direct contact. On occasion they will visit in person to ask for additional information or documents.

Whether the auditor asks to visit your school or asks you to send in your records, they will want to see the following items.

- Gift Aid declarations for the donations included in your claim.
- Evidence to show that you received and banked the donations.
- Evidence to show that you received and banked the tax repayment.
- Any other records or documents you may have relating to the claim.
- A copy of your school’s latest accounts.

If the auditor finds mistakes with your Gift Aid claim, your school may have to repay some of the Gift Aid claimed. The auditor will explain what the errors are, how to correct them if possible and how to avoid them in future.
Writing a staff wellbeing survey: six tips

Planning a staff wellbeing survey? Follow these tips from wellbeing adviser JULIA WATSON

A survey can be a simple and effective way of finding out what staff really think about wellbeing in the workplace. Used well, it can improve retention, increase motivation and support recruitment. But how do you ensure that you find the information you are looking for?

1. Start with the answers
What do you want to find out? Perhaps you want to know how workload is impacting on work-life balance? Or do you need ideas and suggestions on how to improve physical wellbeing? Identifying the answers you want will inform the questions that you choose to ask, providing a clear focus for your survey. Possible areas of interest might be:

- mental wellbeing e.g. accessing support, managing stress
- workload e.g. working hours, email policies, marking protocols
- physical health or healthy habits e.g. adequate drinks, toilet breaks, heavy lifting, exercise, flu jabs, health insurance
- job satisfaction e.g. do staff enjoy their work? Do they feel valued? What can be done to support this?

2. Act collaboratively
Use the hive mind to create and edit the survey. SLT, staff wellbeing groups and interested colleagues are all a source of support and guidance. They will tell you when something doesn’t make sense or if a question is too long, or even pointless! Staff are also much more likely to invest in any initiative if they feel involved from the beginning. This feeling of investment is particularly useful when encouraging staff to complete the questionnaire.

3. Don’t reinvent the wheel
There are some excellent examples of staff wellbeing surveys online. Unless you have hours to spend creating your very own survey (unlikely!), use what is out there already. Head online to my.optimus-education.com/writing-staff-wellbeing-survey-six-tips for some suggestions and links.

Remember to choose questions that are relevant to your focus and to include an introduction, outlining the purposes of the survey, assuring anonymity and stating how the information will be used.

4. Stay solution-focused
Identifying that 90% of staff hate coming to work is not useful information. Surveys are only useful if they point to next steps and inform progress.

An effective survey highlights what does work, so that good practice can be developed and replicated in other areas. It also highlights areas for development and asks people to suggest solutions to this challenge.

For this reason, it’s wise to include some opportunity for extended answers. If the survey is to inform change, use comment boxes for further clarification. This kind of ‘rich’ information is valuable, because it not only uses collective intelligence to solve a problem, but it also makes staff feel listened to and valued.

5. Incentivise
Often the most challenging part of a staff survey is getting it completed. This is where involving staff in the creation of the survey pays dividends: the more invested staff are in the initiative, the more likely they are to find time to complete it.

- Give staff allotted time to complete the survey. This gives a clear message about the value of the information.
- Ensure all staff are asked to take part, not just teaching staff.
- Incentivise: raffle tickets, stickers, lollies, barometer in the staffroom – whatever works in your school.

6. The golden rule

- Share your actions with staff. This can be regular updates in meetings, staff newsletters, emails or a board in the staffroom.
- Use the format ‘You said… we did’ to keep staff up to date with progress.
- Keep the feedback about findings short and factual.

Ensure that the information you gather is acted upon. There is nothing more damaging to staff morale than the sentiment ‘they made us fill in a survey, but nothing happened.’ Use the information to drive forward change, creating happier, more motivated colleagues who feel valued and heard.
Four ways to become an employer of choice

DAVID WESTON describes key ways MATs can become employers of choice where talented individuals want to stay and develop

In a time of significant challenges for recruitment and retention, MATs are under pressure to stand out as great employers. CEOs and executive headteachers are increasingly emphasising the importance of building a brand with a reputation as a great place to work and develop, but often struggling to make that a reality. So how can MATs distinguish themselves as great places to work?

1. Compensation
Pay is always going to be a key factor for anybody choosing their employer. How can you ensure that your MAT stands out for your reputation on pay? Candidates will be interested in a number of things. For example, how does the starting pay compare to similar roles elsewhere? What is the process by which the pay could increase in future within the same role? To what extent is there performance-related pay and how does this work? What progression opportunities are there, such as taking on a larger role within the trust, and would this be compensated appropriately?

MATs can proactively discuss their pay and progression policies within adverts and on websites. You could consider using social media, local media and sector media to share stories about how you’ve supported progression. The media can often be interested in stories such as ‘I started as a cook… now I’m a deputy head!’ Other hooks can be around working with under-represented and local groups to get them into teaching, and sharing stories of their progression.

'Benefits and development opportunities have a larger impact than pay'

2. Benefits
When it comes to retention, research shows us that benefits and development opportunities have a larger impact than pay. A reputation for flexibility can help your MAT to stand out, and it is useful to be explicit in adverts and on websites.

- Holidays: how much work is required during holidays? Are holiday dates, frequency and length in line with standard school practice, or are they unusual?
- Flexibility on leave: what are policies for taking time off during term? How easy is it to get permission for family events, childcare or training?
- Childcare: is there any support, facility or subsidy for looking after children?
- Personal development: would the employer support personal study, such as academic or professional qualifications, or would they subsidise or loan money for these?
- Housing: does the school offer any support for finding housing, for relocating, or for subsiding costs?

Some schools or MATs offer their own housing at a much lower fee to teachers, for example.

- Other benefits: employee discounts for certain purchases (e.g. certain shops or experiences), health and dental care, mental health support, fitness suites, etc.

As before, sharing stories can be powerful. Do you have employees who can celebrate a positive story about how they were helped back into flexible working after paternity or maternity, for example? Could you produce a case study of caring for an employee through a family trauma or serious illness, to emphasise how you value wellbeing and treat people with respect?

When it comes to other benefits, this should be handled with care, as both the profession and public value teaching for its intrinsic motivation; excessive emphasis on other benefits could cause reputational issues.

3. Work-life balance
Employees will be interested in whether this job will still allow them time to live their own lives. Increasingly, schools are making more out of updated marking, data and lesson-planning policies that save teachers significant time. Some leading headteachers are making waves on social media and sector publications by sharing their efforts to ensure that staff are out of the building by 6.00pm at the
'Employees will be interested in whether this job will still allow them time to live their own lives'
Sponsorship of overseas teachers

Sponsoring teachers from overseas can be a solution to recruitment struggles. Lawyer JULIE MOKTADIR explains how it works.

Many schools are seeking to sponsor teachers from overseas where positions cannot be filled by UK and European nationals. The shortage of teachers is recognised by the Home Office, with the inclusion of some roles on the Shortage Occupation List.

Secondary education teachers in maths, physics, science (where an element of physics will be taught), computer science and Mandarin are all on the list, meaning that it may be sensible to fill vacancies through non-European Economic Area (EEA) migration.

Sponsorship licences

If you are seeking to recruit and employ overseas nationals, you should consider the cost implications, legal duties and time constraints.

To sponsor overseas teachers, you must apply to the Home Office for a sponsorship license. The type of license you need will depend upon whether you are looking to employ a skilled worker for a longer period, or in a temporary position. These two categories are known as Tier 2 and Tier 5.

To register as a Tier 2 sponsor (to employ a skilled worker long term or permanently), you will need to submit an online application and provide several original documents. A sponsor licence will ordinarily be valid for four years. This is of course so long as the licence is not revoked or surrendered.

Overseas criminal record checks

Immigration law is ever-changing. As of April 2017, a new requirement for overseas criminal record checks was introduced. Tier 2 (General) applicants who fall within a standard occupation classification (SOC) code will need to obtain a criminal record certificate. Any adult dependants will also need to obtain a certificate. A certificate needs to be from every country that the applicant has resided in for 12 months or more, for the 10 years prior to the application being made.

Obtaining certificates from all places of residence will take a considerable amount of time, so it is sensible to apply for certificates well in advance of commencing the application process.

Compliance

As a Tier 2 sponsor you will need to accept several responsibilities, keep good employment-related records and notify the Home Office of changes relating to Tier 2 employees. The Home Office may also make site visits, to ensure compliance.

Once you have obtained your sponsor licence, you can use the sponsorship management system (SMS). The SMS can be used to manage or renew your organisation’s license or services; create and assign certificates of sponsorship (CoS) (Tier 2 or 5); and to report changes of circumstances.

There are specified appointments that need to be made to manage the sponsorship process.

SMS reporting

To comply with your duties, you need to regularly access your SMS account. The SMS can be used to manage or renew your organisation’s license or services; create and assign certificates of sponsorship (CoS) (Tier 2 or 5); and to report changes of circumstances.

Suitability checks

You may not get a sponsorship licence if anyone involved has an unspent conviction, has broken the law or been a key person at a sponsor whose licence has been revoked. You must also be based in the UK most of the time. (See my.optimus-education.com/sponsorship-overseas-teachers for a full list of suitability checks.)

Non-compliance

If you are in a situation where you are non-compliant, for example, you have failed to keep a record of staff absence or attendance or you do not have the required personnel, you could have your licence revoked. This could mean that your sponsored workers would need to leave your organisation, and possibly the UK if they cannot find an alternative sponsor.

The Home Office can visit and conduct checks on any sponsor. These visits can be unannounced. Failure to comply with sponsorship duties can result in a £20,000 fine for employing illegal workers if relevant, and/or the loss of your sponsorship license.

It is possible to appoint the same person in these roles. A level 2 user may also be appointed.

• Authorising officer: usually the person with overall responsibility for recruiting employees.
• Key contact: the main point of contact with UKVI.
• Level 1: user responsible for day-to-day management of the licence.
What’s in this month’s Teaching and Learning section?

Have you made resolutions for this academic year? Do they include a commitment to improving your work-life balance? Teacher turned therapist Julia Watson has been blogging about the rise of perfectionism in the teaching profession, and how perfectionist tendencies can be detrimental to wellbeing. Read and take note! Discussions about staff wellbeing inevitably lead to talk about marking. Teachers at Wilmslow High School have been using dot marking as a way to indicate ‘check this’, thus reducing the need for written comments on aspects of work that pupils can easily improve themselves (see overleaf). Tom Fay has also been investigating how to inculcate learner independence: turn to page 32 for his article on ‘passing the learning buck’.

Pupils and staff at Hockerill Anglo-European College take thoughtfulness about learning seriously. They embarked on a school-wide reflection project three years ago, a journey which has taken them as far as Japan. Read about their story so far on page 34. And did you know that the fastest growing group of EAL children is in the EYFS stage? Inclusion expert Diane Leedham shares key principles for positive provision.

Contributors in this issue

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

Julia Watson is a clinical hypnotherapist and an adviser on the Wellbeing Award for Schools. She started her career as a teacher specialising in challenging behaviour. @OxfordFamilyHt1

Shamiela Davids is director of innovation at Hockerill Anglo-European College, a state boarding school. She values her international outlook and has always brought and promoted a holistic view of education.

Tom Fay is executive director of teaching and learning at Pontefract Academies Trust. Tom has over 13 years’ experience in the secondary and FE sectors, and his passion lies in the development of outstanding learning.

Top teaching and learning blogs

Teachers: do you have the X factor? oego.co/x-factor
School readiness: who is ready for whom? oego.co/school-readiness
Teachers can make their mark with written feedback oego.co/written-feedback
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Using dot marking in the classroom

Using a dot to indicate 'check this' is a small but powerful way to encourage self-reflection and reduce teacher workload. CERI GEORGE shares how it works in practice.

Marking books is fast becoming something of an art form. There are teacher tales aplenty of schools marking with five different coloured pens, providing response tasks to response tasks, as well as a pupil-teacher dialogue on each piece of work!

But how much impact does this level of marking actually have? And more importantly – in times of tightening budgets and increasing workloads – is it sustainable?

Why do we mark?

- Check knowledge and understanding.
- Identify errors, mistakes and misconceptions.
- Inform lesson planning.
- Inform pupils of the next steps in their learning.
- Encourage pupils to:
  - reflect and refine
  - take pride in their work
  - learn from their mistakes.
- Not to keep Ofsted, SLT and parents happy!

What is dot marking?

Dot marking involves the teacher placing a red dot next to any aspect of a pupil's work that needs to be improved. More subtle than a cross and certainly less offensive, the dot simply means, 'check this'. 'Check this' could indicate:

- spelling mistake
- grammatical mistake
- incorrect term used
- explain this more
- silly mistake
- complete this
- have you forgotten something?

There is no doubt that high quality marking and feedback can improve pupils' learning and progress. In fact, the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) 'Teaching and Learning Toolkit' reports that effective feedback can have a potential gain of more than eight months on pupil progress.

But is it possible to provide feedback that maximises progress at a minimal cost to the teacher? Enter the humble dot…

Pupils respond more positively to dot marking than to traditional ticks and crosses'

The dot should encourage the pupil to reflect on their work, either independently, by discussing with an elbow partner, or by asking you for advice. Once they have established the reason for the dot, they make the relevant corrections.

In the example below, dot marking has been used to identify spelling mistakes. The pupil has corrected the words in red pen.

Dot marking works particularly well when dealing with mistakes in a pupil's work.
Mistakes (.)

- Check this!
- Use the correct terminology (e.g., ‘potential difference’ NOT ‘volts’)!
- Include headings
- Include units
- Spelling
- Have you got it the right way round?
- Add more information/explain this further

Provide a visual aid for pupils to remind them what the red dot means

pupil’s work. However, it doesn’t work so well for errors and misconceptions. This is because, as pointed out in the EEF evidence review ‘A Marked Improvement?’, ‘pupils would not have the knowledge to work out what they had done wrong’.

Therefore, dot marking should not be used as the sole marking and feedback strategy within your department or team, but rather as part of a menu of strategies.

The benefits of dot marking

Learning from mistakes: if pupils are to learn from their mistakes, they need to engage with the feedback given. Dot marking encourages this: while the dot indicates where a mistake has been made, the pupil has to recognise how they were mistaken and then also make the relevant corrections.

Speed: one of the biggest benefits of dot marking is that it’s relatively quick to do. Far quicker than writing comments, response tasks or even codes, this makes it more sustainable than many other marking strategies. It’s also why dot marking works particularly well in conjunction with live marking.

Live marking: live marking takes place within the classroom, within the lesson. As pupils work through a task, the teacher moves around the room giving instant feedback for improvement. It’s hoped that this will improve the quality of first draft work produced by pupils, addressing mistakes as they arise.

More interaction, less marking outside of lessons: an obvious bonus of live marking is that as some of your marking will be done during the lesson, you will have less marking outside of lessons. This effect will be further compounded if you use dot marking while live marking, as you will be able to interact with more pupils within a lesson than if you were writing comments or codes.

How do pupils respond to dot marking?

As with any new classroom strategy, some initial training is required. The first few times that you try dot marking with a class, you will need to explain what the dots might mean. This could be done verbally, via a PowerPoint slide or classroom poster.

You will also need to give pupils time to respond to the dots. As noted by Hattie and Timperley in the article ‘The Power of Feedback’, ‘providing feedback is only a part of the equation’. Consequently, dedicated improvement and reflection time (DIRT) is essential.

In my experience, pupils respond more positively to dot marking than to traditional ticks and crosses. Possibly because a dot appears less permanent than a cross, my pupils have been more likely to ‘have another go’. In fact, they quite often write their corrections over the dot, so it’s almost as though the dot were never there.

How do teachers respond to dot marking?

While teachers might appreciate that dot marking will save them time, some might be concerned that it looks lazy. Consequently, it’s important to inform your SLT that you’ll be using dot marking and to educate parents/carers on what they can expect to see in their child’s book. Updating your marking policy should also help to reassure these teachers.

Sharing photographs of dot marking in action can also be very influential, particularly if the pictures show work (and corrections!) completed by your pupils via their schemes of work. This will show that it is possible for a simple dot to inspire high quality self-reflection and self-correction. As one teacher at my school noted, dot marking has ‘as much impact as response tasks but without the time writing them’.

Allow teachers the opportunity to experiment with dot marking for themselves; let them determine how to make dot marking work for them and their pupils. Encourage them to take photographs of their own dot marking, in order to develop and share good practice and build confidence within the team.

In summary

- Dot marking should be used as part of a menu of marking and feedback strategies.
- Use dot marking to identify mistakes in pupils’ work, not errors and misconceptions.
- Update your marking policy to include dot marking.
- Display posters in classrooms to show what the dots could mean.
- Regularly share good practice via photographs.
- Use dot marking as part of live marking.
- Encourage your teachers to experiment!
Passing the learning buck

Developing learners who will reflect and act on feedback can be a challenge. TOM FAY shares strategies for promoting ownership of learning

The holy grail of education is to get pupils thinking about what they have already learned, what they are about to learn, and what more they need to learn to develop expertise. I realise that this might sound like a utopian vision, but creating independent learners may not be as difficult as you think. The principles – know thy self!

• Self-regulation – I know what I need to do.
• Self-motivation – I want to do it for myself.
• Self-reflection – what more do I need to do, has it gone well?
• Self-evaluation – what have I done well and how could I further improve?

How do teachers promote these attitudes?
The starting point is creating high expectations and a culture of working together to promote learning. A teacher’s credibility and teaching skills are vital for students to trust that independent learning strategies are going to work for them. Remember many students will be used to a ‘spoon fed’ culture where they can remain passive and still achieve relatively well. Developing the skills required to become a self-manager will be frustrating. Students need to develop resilience and realise that failing is part of learning.

1. Share the skills and processes needed for pupils to think for themselves. Model the process in lessons. Create opportunities to discuss content that will lead to a deeper evaluation and analysis of responses. Where applicable, provide time for pupils to process content together and to feed back their findings. Where you identify gaps, have strategies in place to close them (such as peer learning, the provision of additional resources, clues to complete tasks, model answers, opportunities to search online and defined criteria that indicate when they have reached an expected level of learning). Provide pupils with opportunities to teach their peers, design their own projects and investigate case studies in order to develop a broader understanding.

2. Make use of showcasing and comparative analysis. Our brains are pattern-seeking organs. Using oral and written model responses can be beneficial when it comes to getting pupils to compare their work against others, or yours. Use highlighter pens so that pupils can highlight similarities and differences between their written work and one of their peers. To make this more beneficial, give them the opportunity to showcase evidence of learning (in the short to long term). This could involve simple spelling corrections or redrafting text. Providing pupils with the opportunity to mark exams with you and develop assessments to test their peers can also be powerful! This will facilitate discussions about, and evaluation of, the responses.

3. Scaffold content. Most teachers provide content that is simple and gets more complex over time (the bottom-up approach), but there are times where reversing the teaching strategy will benefit learning. By revealing the most complex information, question or response first, you can signify the difficulty level. This can then be decoded and pulled apart to create ‘the sum of all parts’ required to develop expertise. Revealing an answer and asking pupils to design strategies and methods to work it out can prove as effective as the reverse, particularly in the science subjects.

4. Use good questioning techniques. Teachers can ask many questions in lessons but the ratio of the number of questions a teacher asks to the number of questions a pupil asks is often skewed. It is worth supporting colleagues’ questioning strategies in lessons by:

• recording the number of questions asked by the teacher
• recording the number of questions asked by the pupils
• recording the range of questions asked by pupils during an observed time frame
• recording the question command words.

Changing the command words to questions asked can be a simple but powerful strategy to evaluate a pupil’s deeper learning and understanding. It also encourages ‘intelligent floundering’ and provides an opportunity to stretch a pupil’s thinking to the edge of their comfort zone. Teachers that create a culture of independent
learning allow time for pupils to respond and have a strategy in place for recording misconceptions or misunderstandings (for example a live learning journal).

5. **Empower teachers and students to take risks.**
   Self-regulatory planning and evaluation are critical for students to develop expertise. It’s important to teach them how to make the right learning choices, both in and out of the classroom. Given the choice, many pupils will choose the easiest tasks to complete. Sharing expectations and targets in the right manner can lead to more reflective learning. Each pupil should have their own target to reach (rather than comparing against other pupils) so that their success is personal. Problem solving, problem sharing and problem dissipation strategies improve learning over time. Creating a culture where it is acceptable for teachers to take risks and relinquish control in their lessons greatly supports the development of independent learning. Creating a culture where pupils develop new learning from feedback on failure greatly supports any metacognition strategy.

**Common challenges for teachers**

**Discovery learning:** not all discovery learning is effective. There will be times when you just need to teach the pupils. Many pupils do not have the skill set to effectively research content and valuable learning time is lost to just giving them the answers if activities are not well planned. **Misaligned expectations:** your expectations need to be the same for everyone. Never assume that more able pupils have the inherent skill set to self-reflect and self-develop (these skills need to be taught). Likewise, never assume that less able pupils will never have the skill set to succeed (they are better than you think). **Aspirational issues:** there will be pupils who struggle with independence and thinking critically about their learning. Many pupils want to go into lessons and just be taught rather than having to play an active role in their learning. A lack of aspiration or desire to become more independent can be a real blocker. The teacher’s credibility, patience and understanding of strategies to promote metacognition will be vital in these instances. **Professional development:** invest CPD time to ensure the whole staff body work together on this. Included in this type of CPD should be the mechanisms in which we learn new information (contextual base lining to expert level). Many teachers highlight a lack of structured Inset that fully delineates the best strategies to promote independent learning and metacognition.

To summarise: creating independent learners that reflect and act on feedback is not easy. However, by introducing some simple strategies over time pupils do get used to taking ownership of their learning. You need every member of staff to commit to the process if expectations in each classroom are to be consistent.

**Independent learners:**
- understand how to learn
- obtain immediate feedback from their teachers
- do not worry about failure in the ‘here and now’
- enjoy what they are doing
- think about their learning and share this with others
- understand why they are successful
- understand the next steps that need to be taken
- understand what works best and why
- understand how their work compares to others
- understand how close they are to their learning goals.

**Questions to promote self-regulation**
Persist in directing pupils to answer these questions. Build time into lessons for this level of reflection.
- What do I need to do?
- What resources do I need?
- How do I know I am successful?
- What can I change to make it even better?
- How could I help others (mentoring/coaching)?
- What did not work?
- If I was to do this again I would…
- What is the worst possible question I could be asked about this content?

**What can we do in class?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The simple things</th>
<th>The complex things</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Have high expectations</td>
<td>• Teach pupils how to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use your expertise to inspire pupils</td>
<td>• Create learning journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use feedback as a driver to improve</td>
<td>• Develop expert resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rigorously plan for differentiation</td>
<td>• Encourage peer coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess regularly and track progress</td>
<td>• Design bespoke assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teach pupils how to revise</td>
<td>• Model effective strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What can we do out of class?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The simple things</th>
<th>The complex things</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Involve parents</td>
<td>• Remove barriers to learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organise appropriate trips and visits</td>
<td>• Decode the best revision strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>•Expose pupils to graduates</td>
<td>• Create a pupil marking team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be a role model</td>
<td>• Create a pupil examination team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take every opportunity to showcase development</td>
<td>• Develop peer mentoring/ coaching</td>
</tr>
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**References and further reading**

“*What is independent learning and what are the benefits for students?*”, Meyer, B et al, Department for Children, Schools and Families Research Report (2008)


Developing a reflective school

A more reflective mindset has enabled students at Hockerill Anglo-European College to develop their self-esteem and critical thinking. **SHAMIELA DAVIDS** shares their journey so far

**Our school’s decision** to implement reflection as a learning and life skill arose out of the need for our students to challenge themselves by becoming more authentically engaged and self-directed in every aspect of their development. Our curricular and pastoral development plans echo the mission of the International Baccalaureate (IB) to develop open-minded, enquiring, responsible global citizens.

**Our context**
Hockerill Anglo-European College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 11 to 18. We offer a rigorous and broad curriculum and are proud to be one of the largest state schools offering the International Baccalaureate Middle Years and Diploma programmes.

Judged by Ofsted as outstanding and ranked by the Sunday Times Schools Guide 2018 as the top ranked state comprehensive school (UK), the culture of the school is confident and all the stakeholders highly motivated.

However, confidence and motivation don’t guarantee openness to change, and in starting the reflection programme we encountered the usual obstacles which hinder paradigm shift. Teachers seemed unwilling to engage, with a reluctance to learn about the practice or acquire the expertise to impart reflection skills to students. One major unspoken issue was convincing colleagues that reflection is activity, not passivity. And we had to negotiate the practical steps necessary to embed reflection in the school culture.

**The reflection project**
The project was launched in September 2015, and has continued to develop from an activity which takes place in two year groups to a practice which pervades many aspects of school life. The project has been three-pronged, with a goal of making reflection evident in tutor time, class time and in the boarding context.

The first stage involved identifying areas of the school where reflection would have the most impact on learning. We decided to focus on Year 7 and Year 12 as good transition points in the students’ learning journey.

Next, the project was introduced to the student body in a series of year group assemblies, explaining what reflection was and how it could benefit independent learning, critical thinking and creativity. Students were exposed to several different outcomes: voice and video recordings as well as other visual forms of expression. It was emphasised that reflection did not have to be in the written form.

Reflection as an independent activity appeared to work better for students who were willing to set aside the time to think critically about what they had achieved. Individual teachers and tutors were encouraged to collate soundings from students through focus groups in various contexts. We also commissioned a survey of the impact of assemblies, the overall result of which was that students found them more relevant since the project launch.

Staff were encouraged to record their thoughts in a central electronic folder and students to record their thoughts in their planners.

**Gaining traction: CPD**
In 2016 a science teacher attended a course on dialogic feedback. This emphasised the importance of dedicated reflection time and developing students’ capacity for self-criticism and self-correction, rather than waiting for feedback and instructions to correct from the teacher.

Our colleague spent 15 minutes cascading his knowledge at the end of a 'Students share their self-evaluations and target-setting strategies openly and confidently'
CPD slot and suddenly, most colleagues understood reflection as a critical feature of our classroom practice. Subsequent discussions in teams generated suggestions and questions.

- When should reflection take place?
- Is the quality of reflection improved when undertaken in the pre-learning or post-learning phase of the lesson?
- Is reflection better undertaken individually or as part of a learning conversation with a peer?

A Japanese influence
Our head of Japanese, also our mindfulness expert, ran an informal session on the forms of reflection practised in Japanese schools. Using a video clip documenting one of her visits to Japan, she revealed how children as young as five are encouraged to be self-critical in the Japanese education system. Divided into groups and allocated various daily duties, including cleaning and serving lunch, the pupils then reflect on their performance.

I was astonished by the confidence with which an eight-year-old spontaneously convened a meeting, conducting a reflection session where the group’s success was critically evaluated, and where collective ideas for immediate improvement were generated and adopted. This was complemented by individual reflection where at the beginning and the end of an event, individual students critically evaluated their own performance.

While we could not import this model wholesale, it has impacted on colleagues, who now encourage students in Years 7, 8 and 9 to develop a more self-critical disposition. The students state that they are happier to share their self-evaluations and target-setting strategies openly and confidently, so that learning is not only about the product but also the process.

Expert advice
With the impetus for reflection gaining traction in the school, we needed to aid its further success. First on the list of priorities had to be teacher training. We engaged the services of Dr Simon Brownhill, an expert in reflection in the Faculty of Education, Cambridge University. He spent three twilight sessions with the teaching staff over a period of three weeks, so that everyone could attend one of the sessions.

Dr Brownhill modelled what reflection could look like in the classroom context. He provided examples of reflection for every occasion: some for the individual, some for the group, some which last seconds, and some which last for 20 minutes.

- Unstructured reflection: using logbooks, diaries, journals, blogs, jotters, sticky labels.
- Structured reflection: responding to a standard template of questions, headings or questionnaire.
- Graphic reflection: creating diagrams, charts, maps, patterns, collages, taking and talking about photographs.
- Sensory reflection: listening to a monologue, watching online stimuli, responding to smell and touch triggers e.g. handling symbolic objects.

Going deeper
Reflection has become part of what happens in form time. In parallel, we have included mindfulness in our wellbeing curriculum so that our students have the opportunity to take reflection much further, should they choose to.

Following this, we set up an enrichment programme in Year 10 made up of creativity, activity, service and enrichment (CASE). The course runs for two lessons a cycle and it is made up of six modules, each with a reflection component.

The journey so far
Three years later, our practice is still patchy and there is by no means complete consistency across the school. However, it is becoming part of our school culture. We have been helped to grasp the nettle by student reflection becoming a mandatory part of the IB Diploma Programme. All students have to reflect in the process of their extended essay, their theory of knowledge course and their creativity activity and service components; students record these reflections on our e-learning platform.

All faculties and departments are required to design spaces for reflections in their subject booklets on a termly basis. Similarly, student planners contain pages specifically set aside for reflection. Boarding reports are written after boarders have produced a written reflection.

We started with a willingness to:

- take a risk
- start a conversation
- work with what we had and to develop it
- bring in expertise where necessary.

The project has endured and reflection is appreciated as a bone fide way of learning and of developing self-esteem. We are now working on improving the quality of what we do but we have no intention of ‘measuring our success’. We would not wish to destroy the spirit of something so very special, which has clearly had a positive effect on our school community, by creating yet another measure by which to fail.
EAL learners in the early years

The fastest growing group of EAL children is in the EYFS stage. DIANE LEEDHAM shares key principles for harnessing and developing language proficiency.

From the first day of publication in November 2017, the recommendations of ‘Bold beginnings’, Ofsted’s report on the Reception curriculum, have proved to be a controversial source of discussion for many EYFS teachers and organisations. However, for those EYFS settings with children with EAL, there are no specific recommendations to engage with in the report. EAL learners and their varied linguistic and cultural contexts are not mentioned once.

In view of the pupil demographic in England, this is somewhat surprising. The annual school census return records a steady rise in the number of EAL children in primary schools, standing at 20.6% in the January 2017 return. The fastest growing group of EAL children is in the EYFS stage.

So, even if ‘Bold beginnings’ does not discuss their discrete curriculum needs, schools should make provision for their youngest EAL learners a priority. Here are some suggested principles to keep in mind.

1. EAL learners are not a homogenous group

Just knowing that a child in your setting is ‘EAL’ is not enough to help you understand that child’s individual social, cultural and linguistic context sufficiently to best support their learning.

You certainly cannot tell how long the family has lived in the UK or in what circumstances. When asking questions about background, it’s crucial to be sensitive to the current ‘hostile climate’ for migrants so that you can build trust and get a holistic picture of the child in your care, particularly with the most vulnerable families.

The majority of our youngest EAL children are born in the UK, but many are growing up in bilingual or multilingual families and will be using English for the first time in nursery or Reception.

This does not mean either their language or their learning development is behind their peers; in fact, they may already be age-appropriate fluent in several languages.

2. Parent partnerships are vital

Parental engagement and partnership are even more crucial for children with EAL than their monolingual peers, particularly if nobody in your team speaks the relevant language. If there are any concerns about first language development then the family is your best source of information and unless the child is fully bilingual, the family can also give the most accurate picture of their physical, emotional and cognitive development.

It’s always a good idea to research in advance the local options for interpretation and translation, both via informal community links and professional services that might be needed for safeguarding or assessment.

3. Do your language research

It’s also important for home visits and family interviews to include discussions about each child’s social and linguistic repertoire. That means, not just which language(s), but when they are used and with whom. The family languages chart was developed by Raymonde Sneddon at Goldsmiths College, University of London, and is a really useful tool for this purpose. You can download the template from my.optimus-education.com/eal-learners-early-years

The template example illustrates the rich variety of communicative practice in a child’s family and the potential for metacognition about that language use to support proficiency and knowledge about language in an education setting.
'A focus on oracy, interactive play and experiential learning is ideal for rapid development in English'

4. Encourage use of first language(s)
Clearly a child in the English school system needs to become proficient in English as soon as possible and the focus on oracy, interactive play and experiential learning in the EYFS is ideal for supporting rapid development in English.

However, the quality of English experienced and practised counts for as much as quantity, and young children should also be encouraged to continue using and developing their first language(s) as a support for their phonological awareness, comprehension and metacognition as well as affective areas such as relationships.

There are strong arguments for learning to read in your most proficient language, since that is the language in which you have most experience of hearing and making sounds and meaning and it's the language in which you have the widest vocabulary knowledge. Of course, this may not always be possible and in any case, young children with EAL do not always have one language which presents as their ‘most proficient’.

It's important to provide guided access to bilingual or dual language books and/or recordings and to reassure parents that learning to read in first language will not interfere with progress in English. Multilingual storytelling and narration is a fantastic opportunity to support family literacy and learning, particularly if parents are also learning English.

In any case, it’s vital to prioritise the development of oral language and vocabulary development in children who have EAL and are new to English. If they receive phonics instruction too far ahead of their oracy and word knowledge then they may do very well at phonics in the short term, but not progress successfully as readers in the future. (To find out more, look up Dr Victoria Murphy’s blog post ‘Learning to Read in Another Language’.)

What parents of EAL children at EYFS need
- Reassurance and empathy that their home language(s) and culture are recognised and valued.
- Accurate information about multilingualism and practical advice for bringing up bilingual or multilingual children.
- Information about the English curriculum and ways they can support their child’s learning both in English and in first language, for example via home languages reading schemes and family learning.
- Representation of their children and families throughout the setting and its resources and curriculum.
- Partnerships with other parents, with teachers, with the community, with supplementary schools and with ESOL providers.

What teachers of EAL children at EYFS need
- Accurate information about multilingualism and strong learning partnerships with parents/carers.
- Intercultural awareness in order to support representation and diversity and challenge stereotypes and bias.
- Basic knowledge about children’s languages in the setting to support simple interactions and encourage children’s wider use and metacognition.
- EYFS appropriate English proficiency tracking.
- First language assessment and tracking strategies.
- Comfort with an EAL learner’s silence in the early stages of acquisition and multilingual/translanguaging interactions.
- Awareness of possible diagnostic signs that additional language/learning investigation and support might be needed.
- Recognition of the context rich, oracy focused advantages of EYFS for language learning.
- Recognition that language learning requires structured support, modelling and practice, not just ‘immersion’.
- Creative digital approaches to support understanding, oracy and multilingualism (e.g. Talking Tins/QR codes, sound-enabled labels, PENpal from Mantra Lingua).

In summary
To sum up, a useful reflective question for any EYFS setting with EAL learners is:
‘Which languages are alive in your EYFS setting and what activities and resources are in place to encourage their use and development?’

Download Diane’s list of recommended resources from my.optimus-education.com/eal-learners-early-years
The term ‘perfectionist’ can be used to describe someone who likes things done properly or would go the extra mile to get a job done. However, in my clinical practice I have observed that for a growing number of professionals, being a bit of a perfectionist is not a blessing, but a curse. I’ve seen teachers who lined up display boards with spirit levels. Teachers who take half a day to write an hour-long lesson plan. This may be due to greater pressures within the education sector, or that a culture of increased testing and hoop-jumping has attracted new teachers with a proclivity for perfectionism. A perfectionist is someone who:

- sets unrealistic goals for themselves and others, and expects them to be delivered in an exact way
- is highly critical of themselves and others
- amplifies small ‘errors’ and ‘imperfections’ into large problems
- will push others away, preferring to work alone or take sole control
- has a black and white way of thinking and will often catastrophise
- often procrastinates.

Myths of perfectionism

‘Perfectionists are driven to success by their exacting standards’

Perfectionists work towards their idea of the perfect outcome and anything less is considered a failure. They can reach too far when setting goals and run late when they try to do too many things in the time available. Even when perfectionists do reach their perfect outcome, they don’t enjoy it, because there’s always something that could be done better.

‘Perfectionism just means “doing things properly”’

Perfectionists indulge in catastrophic thinking. If the outcome is not deemed perfect, they can become highly critical of themselves (and others) for ‘failing’. Perfectionists find it hard to work in (or even lead) teams because they want everyone else to do things their way. There is little room for the ideas (and imperfections) of others.

‘I’m not a perfectionist, I’m just stressed because I’m so busy. If we didn’t have so much marking and testing to do, I’d be fine!’

Perfectionists will procrastinate. They’ll tell you that they are so busy. But in reality, they are scared and their inability to do less than their idea of perfect prevents them from getting things done. Fear of failure is crushing to the perfectionist.

Fear of failure

Those who experience fear of failure describe feeling stuck, almost like a rabbit in the headlights. What they are experiencing is very high levels of anxiety. Perfectionists have learned to cope with this anxiety by controlling their work, environment and often, the people around them. They can be deeply lonely, frustrated individuals, because their coping strategy is an inflexible, isolating one and other human beings fall short of their exacting standards. The key is understanding that perfectionism is a stress response to anxiety and as anxiety lowers, perfectionist behaviours will lessen.

How to help a perfectionist

- Create a solution-focused ethos where thinking solely in absolutes is discouraged and ‘failure’ impossible.
- Set reasonable expectations. Senior leaders demonstrating healthy self-esteem in the face of adversity is particularly helpful.
- Encourage staff to have a healthy work-life balance through email protocols and school site closing hours that safeguard weekends, evenings and holidays.
- Avoid placing perfectionists together in job shares. It can cause competition.
- If you need to speak to a perfectionist about their work, take the time to begin it with inconsequential language, for example asking about a child or pet, an interest, or something pleasant that will lower anxiety and make the conversation smoother.

Beware the pursuit of perfection!

Perfectionism is not ‘wanting things done right’. It’s a fear-based response to anxiety which wastes time and talent, says JULIA WATSON

Managing Staff Wellbeing

This year’s Managing Staff Wellbeing conference is focused on reducing stress and improving retention. See more details at oego.co/Wellbeing_18
What’s in this month’s SEN and Safeguarding section?

When planning your approach to SEND provision over the school year, it’s important not to lose sight of the significant majority of pupils with special educational needs who will not have a Statement or EHCP. Natalie Packer outlines how you can find effective ways to work with these pupils overleaf. A new version of the safeguarding statutory guidance, ‘Keeping children safe in education’ comes into effect from September. Education lawyer Dai Durbridge provides an overview of the main changes on page 50. The government’s green paper on transforming provision for mental health has proposed that every school appoint a designated senior lead for mental health. Not sure what this will mean for you? Turn to page 44 for Zoe Dale’s advice. Providing young people with the means to overcome adversity is no simple task, but in boarding schools it means a lot more than ‘toughening up’. Ian Morris offers his perspective on page 46. Finally, don’t forget to check your inbox for new and updated resources throughout the term!

Jack Procter-Blain, Content Executive

Top SEN and safeguarding blogs

Establishing a model for SENCO supervision
oego.co/supervision

’I have a voice – hear me’: Jonathan’s story
oego.co/hear-me

4 ways to develop resilient teenage learners
oego.co/resilient-teens

See more at blog.optimus-education.com

Contributors in this issue

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Zoe Dale is a consultant trainer for Young Minds and an occupational therapist specialist in CAMHS. She has delivered child mental health services in education settings for the past 12 years.

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Raising our expectations for pupils on SEN support

How do we make sure that pupils without EHCPs are thriving, not falling behind? NATALIE PACKER describes the seven pillars of effective SEN support

Since the introduction of the SEND reforms in 2014 there has been a significant focus on pupils with education, health and care plans (EHCPs). Just over 14 per cent of the school population has been identified as having a special need but less than three per cent of these pupils will have an EHCP. This means that the significant majority of children and young people with SEND will be having their needs met through SEN support, making it essential for teachers to find the most effective ways to work with, support and plan for meeting the needs of these pupils.

The term ‘SEN support’ refers to provision that is ‘additional or different’ from the provision in place for the majority of pupils of the same age. Pupils receiving SEN support have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. In practical terms this might involve specialist programmes, a personalised curriculum, additional resources, extra support from an adult or peer or personal care support.

Coordinating provision across a school where there are wide and varied needs can be challenging, so how can schools ensure they do this effectively?

What makes effective SEN support?

Having recently turned their attention to pupils receiving SEN support, the DfE has published a resource to help teachers and leaders reflect on their own practice. The guidance, ‘SEN support: research evidence on effective approaches and examples of current practice in good and outstanding schools and colleges’, summarises findings from published research alongside advice from those settings that are currently demonstrating good practice in SEN support.

Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach to SEND, the guidance suggests there are seven key underpinning features of effective support that are consistently demonstrated in schools where there is good practice.

1. Culture, leadership and management
2. High quality teaching
3. Use of expertise
4. Personalisation
5. Flexible use of evidence-based strategies
6. Use of evidence for tracking progress
7. Communication and collaboration

These seven key features are particularly effective when developed within the context of a graduated approach to SEN support using the ‘assess, plan, do, review’ cycle. If you are unfamiliar with how to put this approach into practice, look at the

'Select useful information to all staff through one-page profiles'

suggestions and diagram at my.optimus-education.com/assess-plan-do-review-cycle-practice

1. Culture, leadership and management

The success of all these key features of effective SEN support hinges on the culture created by school leaders. To ensure the right provision is in place for pupils with SEND, leaders need to take an approach to developing their policy and practice that is based on a clear, shared vision. This means senior leaders should be encouraging an ethos which values and respects everyone, making the school a place where all learners have an equal right to the highest quality education. Effective leaders make SEND a strategic priority, ensuring all areas of school activity have SEND provision built

SEN support and EHCPs: the statistics

The total number of pupils with special educational needs has increased from 1,244,255 in January 2017 to 1,276,215 in January 2018. However, only 253,680 of these pupils have a statement of SEN or EHCP. The remaining 1,022,535 pupils are on SEN support.

Moderate learning difficulty is the primary type of need for pupils on SEN support, with 24.0% of pupils recording this as their primary need in January 2018. Autistic spectrum disorder is the primary type of need for pupils with statements or EHCPs, with 28.2% recording this as their primary need in January 2018.

in from the start. They also model high expectations, increase the expertise of staff and keep the focus on the pupils in order to ensure positive outcomes for all.

Practical suggestions
- Build in dedicated CPD time over the year for focusing on SEND, linking with whole school planning priorities.
- Ensure the SEN information report reflects the inclusive nature of your school and is accessible to all.

2. High quality teaching
Inclusive high quality teaching (HQT) ensures that planning and implementation meets the needs of all pupils, and builds in high expectations for all pupils, including those with SEND. This is a basic entitlement for all children and young people and should be underpinned by effective whole-school teaching and learning policies and frameworks.

HQT is the first step in responding to pupils who have or may have SEND; additional intervention and support cannot compensate for a lack of good quality teaching. Teachers are responsible for the progress and development of all pupils, hence delivering high-quality teaching is key to ensuring good progress. Teachers need to be knowledgeable and well informed about identifying SEND, potential barriers to learning, providing appropriate support and effectively monitoring and reviewing progress.

Practical suggestions
- Incorporate SEND into teaching and learning as part of the whole-school development plan so it is not seen as an add-on.
- Provide regular information to staff on key strategies for inclusive HQT, such as developing positive relationships, establishing an inclusive classroom, scaffolding and supporting language development.

3. Use of expertise
Effective SEN support cannot be built on the expertise of the SENCO alone. It is important to consider how knowledge, understanding and practice is developed across the school and beyond so that everyone takes responsibility and capacity is increased. Teaching assistants (TAs), for example, form a significant part of the workforce and often work alongside pupils with SEND. Where TAs are supported through high quality induction, professional development, regular communication, monitoring and appraisal they can have a significant impact on pupil progress and independence.

Schools will also access external expertise, for example from educational psychologists, health workers, speech and language therapists, social workers and parents. There should be clear processes in place for staff working with other specialists and the school needs to work in partnership to monitor the impact of any external support on pupil outcomes.

Practical suggestions
- Embed a model of ‘specialist TAs’, with support staff developing specialist knowledge in one of the broad areas of SEND (for example communication and interaction).
- Provide information to staff on other professionals working with the school. Outline who they are, their role and any expectations around communication.

4. Personalisation
Personalising provision involves tailoring packages of high quality support to address the whole range of a pupil’s needs. This is made possible by having a thorough understanding of the individual’s strengths, experiences, needs and preferences.

Personalised approaches will focus on achieving the short and long-term outcomes agreed for, and by, the child or young person. These outcomes should support the pupil to achieve their best, become a confident individual living a fulfilling life, and make a successful transition into adulthood. It is important that everyone is working towards the same goal so young people and their families will be treated as partners, with their contribution to the development and implementation of support fully valued and included.

Senior leaders should be encouraging an ethos which values and respects everyone.

Continued ››
Practical suggestions
- Provide useful information to all staff through one-page profiles or pupil passports developed with the child and family.
- Consider using person-centred planning tools to facilitate full involvement of the child or young person and their family in the decision-making process.

5. Flexible use of evidence-based strategies
Additional or different provision for pupils accessing SEN support can often take the form of a well-structured programme delivered to a small group or on a one-to-one basis. There is a wide range of interventions available and it is important to consider the evidence into what works well when choosing interventions or strategies to use. The Education Endowment Foundation’s ‘Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants’ guidance report outlines some of the common elements of effective interventions. Sessions are often brief, occur regularly and are maintained over a sustained period. Careful timetabling is in place to enable consistent delivery and the adult delivering the intervention receives training. Effective interventions often include structured supporting resources and lesson plans that are followed closely and connections are made between any out-of-class learning and classroom teaching.

A flexible approach to using any additional provision is important. Regular review of the effectiveness of an intervention or strategy through assessment of pupil progress will support schools to make decisions about its impact.

Practical suggestions
- Use available research on effective provision to inform your decisions.
- Ensure there is a clear purpose and rationale for using any additional strategy or intervention. Aim for quality rather than quantity.

6. Use of evidence for tracking progress
Rigorous and reliable assessment, monitoring and tracking of pupil outcomes is key to determining appropriate SEN support. Effective assessment can facilitate early identification, providing a full picture of an individual’s needs, particularly where this involves a combination of formative, summative and diagnostic assessment. This information can then be used to underpin the development of appropriate SEN support for a pupil.

Good schools have robust systems in place for using data to identify, review and assess impact and progress, and to monitor strategies and interventions being used with pupils. These systems build in clear lines of accountability, from teaching and support staff through to middle and senior leaders, ensuring everyone takes responsibility for securing the progress of pupils with SEND.

Practical suggestions
- Include the achievement of pupils with SEND in pupil progress discussions. If appropriate, involve the SENCO in pupil progress meetings.
- Embed a holistic approach to assessment by including measures of progress for other key areas, such as social skills, communication skills or independence.

7. Communication and collaboration
A key principle of the SEND Code of Practice focuses on effective partnership working to ensure pupils with SEND are provided with the whole package of support they need. In practical terms, this means school staff, other professionals, the child and their family developing trusted and supportive relationships, sharing information and being open and transparent. If staff have any elements of good practice or areas of development, it’s important that they are encouraged to share these with colleagues. Effective communication will result in everyone working towards the same goal and sharing an understanding of how to support the child or young person to achieve that goal.

Practical suggestions
- Gather parents’ views on provision for SEND in the school. This could be done through a parent forum, questionnaire or informal discussion.
- Consider the benefits of collaboration on a wider scale, such as joining local SENCO groups to share good practice.

It is important to reiterate the message that there is no one-size fits all approach to providing effective SEN support. However, the evidence outlined above suggests that the seven key features are instrumental in providing a solid foundation for developing good practice.

SENDIA
The SEND Inclusion Award provides a framework for recognising outstanding SEND provision in schools. It helps schools establish their strengths and weaknesses and prioritise areas for further improvement and development. Find out more at: egeo.co/OE-SENDIA
We have been using student passports at Priestnall School for almost a decade now, and the reason for using them has never been clearer. Previously there has been a direct comparison to individual education plans (IEP), but it's important to realise that while an IEP is a fixed statement, a student passport can be much more. It can inform a continuing discussion with the student about their needs in relation to the curriculum and learning, and encourage metacognition.

Why has the passport been so useful?
I know many colleagues from across the UK and further afield who have used the student passport (or a variation of it) and found it useful. It is simple, accessible and helps you home in on a student’s needs and outcomes. It also reflects the ambition of the post-2014 SEND reforms, keeping the child at the centre of the process and incorporating their views. This means ditching the ‘medical model’ for understanding SEND, and making sure that teachers and support staff have a robust understanding of the students they teach.

What has changed in how you use it?
At Priestnall, little has changed in how we use the passport. Rather, the discussions that inform the passport have evolved significantly. Initially we were discussing practical strategies; now we talk mainly about learning and processing. With some students I have had discussions in which I ask them to think about how they learn best, in one or two cases even going as far as to consider how applying cognitive science can improve the quality of learning.

Some young people have a remarkable understanding of themselves, articulating what they find difficult and what solutions might help. The passport is a valuable means of encapsulating this learner-led enquiry.

What information should be on it now?
I’ve always said it isn’t the actual document that matters but the process it facilitates. One aspect that will vary from school to school is the data and attainment information. This is partly because, with the removal of national levels, each school is now expected to adopt its own assessment measures. Additionally, the section on access arrangements has become increasingly important and often links to other school documents.

How can schools make it a ‘living document’?
Most school leaders will upload the passports to a central IT network, with the expectation that teachers will refer to them as part of their lesson planning and teaching. This can make a significant difference. I know headteachers who have introduced student passports across the school and linked them to strategic objectives. As with any system, if the use of passports is linked to your whole-school approach to SEND, it will have a greater impact.

One school I have worked with introduced the student passport in October. They subsequently made ‘How well a teacher uses the student passport to inform teaching and learning’ a criterion in staff observations and appraisals. In other words, every teacher has a ‘SEND target’. This is something positive, not punitive; teachers choose their own target and use the passport in their own way throughout the school year. While I am aware that one size never fits all, the approach worked very well in this particular school. When I returned in May, the feedback from staff, students, parents and carers was overwhelmingly positive.

Whatever approach you take, however you adapt the passport for your own setting, it’s important to keep the main aims clear: positive engagement in discussions about SEND and learning are fundamental in improving outcomes for all.

An example to consider
- Assess: gauge the effectiveness of your current systems.
- Plan: trial student passports with small group of students, parents and carers.
- Do: implement passports for a larger cohort – students with EHCPs, for example.
- Review: after half term, ask all stakeholders to evaluate the impact of using passports on the quality of teaching and learning.

Download our updated student passport template via my.optimus-education.com/student-passport-template
Designated mental health lead: what it means

The mental health green paper proposes a senior lead in every school and college. **ZOE DALE** explains how to get the most from this initiative.

While education and health professionals may applaud the ambition of the green paper published last year, ‘Transforming children and young people’s mental health provision’, fundamental questions about its core proposals – in particular the introduction of a designated senior lead for mental health in every school – remain unanswered.

This article outlines how schools will be able to get the most from this new role in a climate of restricted budgets. It draws on the government’s initial guidance and consultation, along with the advice of leading organisations in education and child and adolescent mental health.

Committee concerns

The green paper set out the government’s ‘three-pillar’ strategy: a designated senior lead for mental health in every school and college, new mental health support teams working with groups of schools and colleges, and trials of a four-week waiting time for access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

In response to the green paper, the education and health select committees published a joint report, ‘Failing a Generation’, which amounts to a sobering criticism of the government’s proposals. The committees express concern that the scope and focus of the planned interventions are insufficient and, in the case of the mental health lead role, lacking necessary detail and protected funding. They impress on the government to recognise that ‘mental health is a significant social justice issue’ for all children and young people.

Training

The most immediate concern for schools should be the training for this role. In the green paper, the government pledges to support every school and college in identifying and training their mental health lead, rolling out this training to all settings by 2025.

We know from the green paper that the mental health lead will be expected to have oversight on the school’s approach to mental health and wellbeing, with particular emphasis on creating and reviewing the school’s behaviour policy, curriculum and pastoral support. They will need to consider how to engage pupils and their parents in wider psycho-education, and help them access a range of mental health interventions.

Organisations such as the British Psychological Society and Association of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapists have drawn attention to the level of professional expertise needed to identify and treat emerging mental health needs in children and young people. Echoing their concerns, the Royal College of Psychiatry has suggested that training should be ‘high quality, regularly updated and consistent across the country.’

If the mental health lead is not equipped with the necessary skills to differentiate between the more complex referrals for CAMHS and cases of emerging need for the new mental health support teams, a
key pillar of the approach outlined in the green paper will prove ineffective.

**Priorities for schools**
- As a baseline, make sure that all staff have or will receive mental health awareness training specifically focused on children and young people.
- Advocate for high quality training for the mental health lead role. Ensure that any training has a clear evidence base, is accredited to an academic or clinical institution, and is subject to objective review and robust quality assurance processes.

**Multi-agency working**
We know that multi-agency working in mental health support takes considerable time, care and multiple face-to-face meetings in order to work. But it can work.

It is vital that schools are seen as equal partners in the process of negotiating mental health care that meets the particular needs of their pupils and communities. After all, strong relationships are paramount to safe, effective and economically viable mental health care.

**Priorities for schools**
Build robust links with your local CAMHS commissioner and CAMHS senior clinical lead or service manager. Agree on a partnership-led approach to making referrals and supporting families, rather than 'passing' cases from agency to agency.

Define local thresholds for CAMHS and mental health support team referrals. In partnership with CAMHS, begin differentiating what needs core CAMHS should address and what the new mental health support teams will cover. Schools should know what emotional and mental health needs can be met safely in school, and how to help pupils access more specialist intervention.

**Combining the mental health and safeguarding leads**
Other commentators have noted that there are notable similarities between the proposed mental health lead and the already well-established designated safeguarding lead (DSL). Given that some DSLs will already be responsible for meeting mental health needs, they will also be expected to step in to the mental health lead role.

This could prove to be problematic: the responsibilities of the mental health lead are significantly broader, encompassing the immediate mental health needs of pupils and staff as well as the development of the school's curriculum. Large schools and colleges may need to consider making the mental health lead a full-time SLT role.

While acknowledging the links between the two roles, the select committees recognised that 'there is a clear difference between protecting and promoting wellbeing, and diagnosing and treating mental illness'. Any training package for the mental health lead role should address the important differences between safeguarding and meeting mental health needs.

**Final thoughts**
As we await further clarity from the government on what funding and training will underpin the role, there are several things schools can start doing now. Firstly, audit what you already provide for pupils’ mental health and wellbeing. How well do your counsellors, educational psychologists, peer mentors, and other pastoral care workers currently cooperate? Alongside this, assess the extent of staff mental health needs in your school.

Consider issuing a confidential staff survey to capture any prevalent sources of stress or anxiety.

Review your school’s PSHE curriculum. How much time do you already devote to discussing the significance of mental health and emotional resilience? It is useful to ask pupils and parents what advice they would value. Parents are increasingly concerned about the emotional wellbeing of their children, so it’s important that schools offer high quality information and guidance.

Create a policy that sets out how the school supports pupils’ mental health and wellbeing. This should be written plainly, and easily accessible on the school website. You could also create an accompanying policy for staff wellbeing, which draws on the results of your staff survey and explains what governors and the senior leadership team are responsible for putting in place.

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**Core responsibilities**
- Coordinate the school’s provision for young people’s mental health needs.
- Build clear working links with children and young people’s mental health services so that the school can refer to the NHS when appropriate.
- Oversee the mental health interventions that take place in school. This could mean supervising the delivery of CAMHS interventions within a school or college, while clinical responsibility for treatment and professional supervision is held by the NHS.
- Give staff the knowledge and skills they need to support children with emerging mental health issues.
- Assess the outcome of interventions on pupils’ attainment and wellbeing. This remains a fundamental question: what is actually making a difference to pupils’ mental health?

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**Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools**
It’s vital that you and your colleagues can provide meaningful mental health support to pupils. This year’s conference is your opportunity to gain the latest strategies, practical skills and resources to promote positive mental health in schools. Details at oego.co/MentalHealthinschools
(14 November, London; 22 November, Manchester).
Resilience and boarding schools

There’s a lot more to resilience than ‘toughening up’. Head of wellbeing IAN MORRIS explains how boarding schools can help pupils to cope with change, challenge and adversity

Boarding schools were once thought to be in a unique position to develop pupils’ resilience. The assumption was that separating a child from their parents somehow toughened them up and prepared them for a life of independence. There is now a large body of research to challenge that assumption and suggest that the experience of being sent away, particularly at a very young age, far from being the making of them was, for some, the breaking of them.

What resilience is (and is not)

Resilience is our ability to cope well with change, challenge or adversity, and to emerge from the experience positively transformed. It is undoubtedly a virtue: an attribute present in a life well-lived. One of the principal images conjured up by the word resilience is of the person who is seemingly impervious to difficult circumstances; so resolute in their focus that they simply cannot be swayed by difficult or painful emotion. Alternatively, we might think of the person who seems somehow capable of splitting off from difficult emotion: packaging it up and not letting it adversely affect them. But it is all too easy to imagine a virtue when in fact we are dealing with a vice. A virtue is what enables us to live an excellent, psychologically healthy life and suppressing or avoiding difficult emotions or experiences, as is now well known, can lead to much greater distress in the long term. Learning not to feel, to be impervious to pain (both ours and that of others) is the vice of callousness.

Resilience sits midway between callousness and overwhelm (where we are so bowled over by circumstance that we cease to function). Real resilience involves acknowledging, accepting and incorporating what we learn from difficult circumstances and emotions into our widening sense of self. Resilience takes time to develop alongside the support of people who care about our development. We do not learn resilience vicariously and we do not learn it by being shielded from difficulty. But we also cannot force the learning of resilience by inflicting unnecessarily difficult circumstances on people.

Resilience in context

Resilience is not developed in isolation. Research on attachment theory has shown that our ability to cope with difficult circumstances is in large part predicated on the security of the attachments we develop over a lifetime. Secure attachments create a strong psychological foundation that enables us to see ourselves as a person who is lovable and to see the world as fundamentally benign (and something to which we are entitled to belong to). If we see the world and the people in it as hostile or indifferent to us, it makes the task of coping with adversity much more difficult.

Additionally, resilience must be accompanied by an understanding of the good and how to bring it about: in other words, moral awareness. Resilience is a non-moral virtue, and to equip people with the means to overcome adversity without also enabling them to develop empathic and moral understanding risks falling foul of what is known as the Machiavellian objection: the fostering of what C.S. Lewis called ‘clever devils’.

Schools play a vital role in helping young people to attain the virtue of resilience. Schools are communities and as such, they provide us with human experiences. In having shared experiences as a community, we have the opportunity to develop empathy and an awareness of the emotional impact of the situations we face. We also encounter hardship and tragedy, inevitably, but as communities we can come together to make sense of these events and foster resilience. However, this cannot be done without proactive and thoughtful effort on the part of teachers and school leaders.

Educating for resilience

The first step is to take stock of how well the school enables pupils to develop confidence in dealing with challenges. Pupils face challenges every day: through the taught curriculum, extracurricular activities and their social interactions with teachers and peers. School life is full of opportunities to find ways of dealing with adversity: from putting your hand up in
class for the first time to going on a demanding expedition. Understanding how to educate for resilience will enable you to make sense of and therefore capitalise on these opportunities.

Educating for resilience requires two things: a network of support and an intellectual framework. Providing a support network, particularly in boarding schools, means making sure that pupils are getting enough sleep, eating the right things at the right times and getting enough exercise. It could also mean consistent pastoral care and access to a counselling service. Upon arriving in a boarding school environment, some pupils will require more support than others and it may even be that leaving their home and family proves too overwhelming. Resilience takes time, and some pupils will just need a little more time than others.

There are intellectual frameworks to help pupils acquire the cognitive skills associated with resilience. One of the most effective is the Penn Resiliency Programme (see www.howtothrive.org), which can help pupils to develop an awareness of the link between what they think, how they feel, and learn to think more flexibly and accurately about adversities they face.

The boarding environment
Like any type of school, boarding schools are well placed to foster resilience in their pupils. Longer school days – potentially including weekends – create more time for extracurricular activities, through which pupils can discover new interests and develop a strong sense of themselves. Living in a community with hundreds of other young people can be a true test of a pupil’s interpersonal skills, which in turn can help them to become more resilient to social challenges. Your school may have more funding set aside for pastoral care or counselling services, thus making it possible to provide a first-rate support network. But to make your support network truly effective, you should invest time in helping pupils to consciously learn the skills intrinsic to resilience (where schemas such as the Penn Resiliency Programme prove useful).

For some children, leaving home for the first time, even if only for a week at a time, can be a very challenging experience. We must dispense with the idea that pupils who struggle with homesickness do so out of weakness of character. It is perfectly normal for the securely attached child to miss their family. We must also challenge the longstanding assumption that sending children to boarding schools will naturally foster resilience: the work of psychotherapists such as Joy Schaverien and Nick Duffell has demonstrated that this is a precarious assumption at best. Resilience is not about ‘toughening up’ or becoming impervious to adversity. It requires an understanding that even though bad things may happen, individuals and communities have the resources to endure them and the potential to grow.

References
For more information about the Penn Resiliency Programme, see www.howtothrive.org/BoardingSchoolSyndrome, Joy Schaverien (2015).
Helping pupils understand online disinhibition

Acting anonymously on social media can lead to a lack of restraint. ALAN MACKENZIE explains how you can help students to understand their online behaviour.

Think before you post. It’s advice we have given to children and young people for many years. A simple, clear and pragmatic message to try to make them understand the importance of the positive and negative impact that online messages can have now and in the future. But for something so simple, this message has its roots in a long history of well-established psychology.

The disinhibition effect
We all know what disinhibition is: a lack of restraint, or impulsivity and poor risk assessment. We are all guilty of this now and again, but the fact that we are hidden behind a device makes a difference.

To understand this difference we must look to Professor John Suler, pioneer of cyberpsychology and author of ‘The online disinhibition effect’ back in 2004. His article details well researched theories on why people may self-disclose or act out online. One of the most important questions Suler asks is, ‘Who are you online?’

The internet gives anyone the opportunity to be who they want to be: you can alter your name, age, personality, appearance, gender and much more to present a persona that is either a true reflection of yourself or someone completely different. A simple example might be your social media profile. What is your username? What information do you disclose about yourself in your profile? What avatar do you use?

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Online and offline behaviour
I use many different social media services, but predominantly Twitter for professional use and Instagram for personal use. The decision as to whether or not I follow somebody is based solely on their profile and a quick glance through a few of their posts. Whether this offers a true reflection of that person I’ll probably never know, but it’s akin to meeting a person face to face for the first time and immediately deciding whether I will talk to them or not. It’s strange when you think of it that way.

Whenever I’m thinking about the difference between online and offline behaviour I’ll imagine a situation. For example, if someone posts something interesting or useful on Twitter, I’ll usually give a compliment, but instead of saying thank you, that person will simply retweet the compliment.

Imagine that in a real-life situation, you meet a ‘friend’ in the street that says something really interesting, you compliment that person and instead of saying thank you, they shout out your compliment at the top of their voice so everyone else knows you’ve complimented them. What strange behaviour!

Benign and toxic disinhibition
Professor Suler explains that the disinhibition effect is a double-edged sword. To people they don’t know, someone may share very personal information, reveal secret emotions or fears, or show unusual acts of kindness. This would be benign disinhibition. But on the flip side, there can be hatred, anger and criticism among others which are described as toxic disinhibition. But the overarching question is, why?

There are eight ingredients to the online disinhibition effect. Most people will recognise the first two, which are arguably the most common we will see across any age group. But they can all be explained very simply: hiding behind a screen.

• Dissociative anonymity – you don’t know me.
• Invisibility – you can’t see me.
• Asynchronicity – see you later.
• Solipsistic introjection – it’s all in my head.
• Dissociative imagination – it’s just a game.
• Perceived privacy – just between you and me.
• Attenuated status and authority – we’re equals.
• Social facilitation – everyone else thinks it’s ok.

Encourage your students to scrutinise their online profiles'

Understand why
The theory of online disinhibition is not an excuse for poor online behaviour. However, for people to be able to
make informed decisions they need to understand what factors are at play. You could tell your students to keep their social media profiles private. But this advice is unrealistic, particularly for an art student who wishes to showcase their work through Instagram, an aspiring footballer showing their skills on YouTube, or an aspiring writer or journalist expressing themselves through blogs to get noticed.

Telling young people what they should or should not do online and the consequences of negative posts is important. But with secondary school students in particular, understanding why things happen, why we sometimes do things without consciously thinking through what we are posting and the potential consequences, is an important aspect of developing critical thinking skills.

Think about actions
I recently realised that, in the assembly-style talks I have given to students to make them aware of the consequences of their online actions, I had been missing out the ‘why’. As I started to include a very simple explanation of online disinhibition, I could see genuine interest on the students’ faces. I used very serious examples (social media posts and YouTube comments are your best friends here!) but I also injected humorous and upbeat examples to keep them engaged.

I distinctly remember the first time I gave this talk to a large assembly of Year 8 and Year 9 students. At the end of the talk I was approached by three girls who openly explained a very serious situation they found themselves in (a child protection matter) as a result of a post they thought at the time was funny. Thankfully they realised something was going horribly wrong before anything happened and they reported the issue to the school. But what they said next was important. ‘Thank you for not blaming us, but for making us realise why we did what we did.’

Whether their actions were due to an aspect of online disinhibition I could not say, but it got them thinking, and that’s impact.

Profile management
Encourage your students to scrutinise their online profiles. What persona do they represent? Is it a true reflection of themselves or are they trying to be someone different? Use a few toxic examples of online posts and discuss what ingredient of online disinhibition this may represent. You don’t need to be a psychologist, neither does their answer need to be correct. The point is to get students thinking critically.

'She theory of online disinhibition is not an excuse for poor online behaviour'
Key updates to KCSIE

An updated version of ‘Keeping children safe in education’ is in effect from September. DAI DURBRIDGE outlines five changes

Back in May, the DfE published a new iteration of the safeguarding statutory guidance, ‘Keeping children safe in education’ (KCSIE). This includes additional information for all staff and clarification on issues such as peer-on-peer abuse, the use of reasonable force and the single central record. The new version of the guidance takes effect from 3 September, and it’s worth summarising some of the main changes.

1. Peer-on-peer abuse
Peer-on-peer abuse could manifest as bullying (including cyberbullying), physical abuse, sexual violence or harassment, sexting, and initiation-type violence or rituals. The updated guidance includes a new section on this complex and often challenging safeguarding issue, which summarises previous guidance as set out in a separate DfE advice note last year. It states that every member of staff should know what the school does to minimise the risk of peer-on-peer abuse and deal with any allegations.

Tip: Even if you have not yet had any incidents involving peer-on-peer abuse, make sure the school’s procedure is set out clearly in your child protection and safeguarding policy.

2. DSLs and file transfer
The updated guidance elaborates on the designated safeguarding lead’s responsibilities when transferring safeguarding information. When a pupil’s safeguarding file is transferred to a new school, key staff such as DSLs and SENCOs need to know about it. It may also be appropriate to share information with the receiving school in advance of the pupil leaving. For example, information that will allow the new school to continue supporting a victim of abuse. Doing so will allow safeguarding procedures to flow smoothly during the pupil’s transition.

Tip: Have a conversation with the receiving school’s DSL to make sure they are up to date on any safeguarding concerns.

3. Use of reasonable force
The inclusion of three paragraphs on reasonable force has not added anything that had not been set out in previous guidance, but it reaffirms the fact that schools have the power to use reasonable force when they need to. There are circumstances when it would be appropriate to use reasonable force to keep your pupils safe, particularly in high-pressure safeguarding situations such as school fights. Be wary of relying on a ‘no contact’ policy. The decision to use force should always depend on individual circumstances.

Tip: Positive behaviour leadership will reduce the need to use reasonable force.

4. Volunteers and regulated activity
The DfE has offered a note of clarity on whether you would be expected to carry out criminal record and barred list checks for volunteers in school.

If the volunteer is engaged in regulated activity and supervised, you are not legally obliged but may choose to obtain an enhanced DBS check (but not a barred list check) in certain circumstances. For more information on supervision in relation to regulated activity, refer to Annex F in the guidance and the separate DBS workforce guides (April 2016).

5. Host families
The updated guidance offers greater clarity on the arrangements schools makes for a pupil to stay with a host family in the UK or abroad. To help assess the suitability of the families who will be responsible for looking after that pupil, you should obtain an enhanced DBS with barred list check. This is applicable to the individuals responsible for the child, but not necessarily to other adults in the household if they do not exercise control or influence over the child. Annex E also includes a short section on simple safeguarding steps to take during the visit, and recommendations to help assess the suitability of host families abroad.

Child Protection in Education
For more information from Dai and the opportunity to bring your safeguarding practice in line with the updated guidance, find out about our Child Protection in Education conferences at oego.co/Protection18 (11 September, London; 18 September, Bristol; 4 October, Manchester).
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