



SSAT Journal 10

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ssat the schools, students
and teachers network

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Welcome

*Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT*



The Autumn term is always a long and busy one, but usually produces some memorable occasions including school plays, Christmas concerts and open evenings. The start of the October half-term always sees the Teaching Awards ceremony, held in London and broadcast by the BBC. It is an immensely valuable celebration of the work of teachers. I am privileged to be a trustee and a judge of the lifetime achievement award. It is inspiring to see practitioners in their thirtieth (or later) year of teaching still being innovative, creative and enthusiastic, with a passion for working with young people. SSAT supports the Teaching Awards; indeed, we strongly believe that we should celebrate the teaching profession's achievements even more.

In September, I experienced for the first time an Ofsted inspection as a chair of governors. In my two years as chair of Melbourn Village College's governing board, the governors supported the senior leadership team in doing what was right for the young people in our context rather than prepare for Ofsted. This was particularly true in curriculum design, and there were concerns that this might not be acceptable to Ofsted. I was delighted that in the letter accompanying the report, the HMI wrote:

'Leaders, including governors, have worked hard to create an innovative curriculum that truly meets the needs of pupils. Your vision is clear and parents value the ways in which the school offers their chil-

dren a broad and rich curriculum alongside strong pastoral support.'

I see this strong focus on students in the articles in this edition of the journal, as well as the dedication of the teachers involved. At SSAT we are determined to celebrate the successes of schools, teachers and students as often as possible. Please share with us the work that you are doing to make the lives of the young people in your care. Thank you for all your hard work – please do not be modest, tell us about your work.

Enjoy this edition of the journal. ■

Illuminating learning: 19 questions we should ask ourselves

Graham Moore,
humanutopia

What exactly are we trying to illuminate? What are we truly trying to understand? Why are we trying to understand, to what end, for what purpose? What difference will it make if we understand? Which questions do we ask in order to elicit the answers that will actually illuminate? It was once said that research proves what you want it to prove, so what exactly are we trying to prove with ‘illuminating learning’?

For me and all at humanutopia, our mission for the past 13 years has been to ask young people to be honest, brutally frank about their perceptions of school and their educational journey. We have tirelessly provided young people with a forum and platform from which to express their views and share their perspectives and experiences of school.

Our primary purpose was motivated by a deep desire to create decisive moments, in which the life of the young person changed course, because they truly and deeply understood their own behaviour and were then able to change if so desired.

Our secondary purpose was to disrupt. We wanted the voices of young people to be heard, we wanted to become advocates for their concerns, to highlight the inadequacies of our education system and shine a light on its frailties, inconsistencies and hypocrisies.

My desire in contributing to illuminating learning is that we are trying to gain a deep grasp of what the



journey through school feels like for a young person. In doing so, we as adults, decision makers and policy writers can improve this experience for all future children regardless of their background, heritage or culture.

So, what questions do we need to ask in order to gain this place of deep, empathic knowledge?

When asking these questions, it is difficult not to let it sound like an attack on teachers. Categorically I stress it isn't; these questions are aimed at our society and our education system. In Africa, it is said that 'it takes a whole community to raise a child.' I therefore urge you, the reader, to assess these questions from a systemic and societal standpoint, so that collectively we can be better informed about the perceptions of young people and subsequently create a much more relevant and accessible educational journey.

So, as a teacher, please review these questions from a personal standpoint and from a corporate perspective, ie on your school's behalf.

1. How do you respond if or when a child struggles in class?

A key performance indicator of the strength of an individual professional, and the sign of a good school, is just how they care for a young person who is struggling – academically, socially, domestically or otherwise. I rarely visit a school that doesn't safeguard young people in a highly effective manner, so I guess a more probing question may be, 'How do you know if a child is struggling?'

2. Does your school focus on strengths or weaknesses?

What is the main focal point of your school culture and your professional dialogue? Does it emphasise or encourage failure? Does the culture of your school and its lessons help students feel good and bounce back? Or do students feel demoralised and demotivated after setbacks?

3. How are creativity and innovative thinking used on a daily basis in your classrooms?

It is now common knowledge that the right brain is key to creativity and innovation, so just how do you encourage students to create and innovate? How often do you encourage your staff and students to take risks and allow them to have extraordinary experiences of discovery in a normal day?



4. Is wellbeing at the heart of your school?

How do you and your colleagues ensure that the welfare, happiness, mental health and wellbeing of all stakeholders is at the very core of all discussions, meetings and actions during any given school day? If this isn't happening, what can you do to ensure this agenda becomes central to a school's daily heartbeat?

5. How is critical thinking used on a daily basis in your classrooms?

Einstein once said, 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.' So in a world that requires us all to solve problems of varying sizes on a frequent basis, shouldn't we be building our lesson structures around real and relevant problems? That would help to enable and empower students to use their imagination and unlock their creativity and innovative powers.

6. How do you train staff to identify and deal with the social challenges affecting students?

How do you make staff aware of the key social challenges facing young people? How do you get adults to remember how subtle peer pressure can be, or how to spot a subversive pecking order and its negative impact on a class or year group? How do you support staff to identify and address some of these highly destructive influences?

7. Do you measure how happy your students are at school?

A 10-year-old boy once asked me, 'Why don't Ofsted measure how happy we are in school?' I had no answer to match his insightful question. Why don't we? With the boom and plethora of online measuring and evaluation tools, it is far easier now to assess just how young people are feeling about many things, including school. Maybe understanding what makes young people happier could help us restructure our curriculum?

8. How are assessments designed to promote learning rather than simple measurement?

Many progressive staff and schools already build their assignments and lesson outcomes around trying to help students develop skills and experiences. They understand that if students feel they are growing from a lesson, there will be a natural upward correlation with their performance. Conversely, it is a fear of failure that causes many students to under-perform.

9. How exactly is learning personalised in your classrooms? In the school?

To what extent do you and your staff assess, know and respond to the individual learning styles and needs of each young person? What tools do you have to assess these important aspects of any educational journey? After the initial hype and response to learning styles and multiple intelligences, these wonderfully illuminating concepts seem to go largely unused in too many schools.

10. What learning models do you use (eg, project-based learning, mobile learning, game-based learning)?

All manner of exciting curriculum innovations are springing up across the globe. Whether it be a coding project from Khan Academy, the latest app like Quizlet to develop language skills, a highly acclaimed Finnish model where students run their local bakery, or the latest problem-solving project from Edutopia, there are hundreds of highly creative and relevant programmes now out there, made even more accessible online.

11. What are the more uncommon barriers to academic progress in your classrooms?

Do you and your staff really know and empathise with the most common barriers to progress? Do you really cater for dyslexia? Are your staff aware of how to spot signs of dyspraxia and how best to support the many young people who struggle with this largely unknown condition? What provision is in place for young people whose confidence is worryingly low and who are painfully shy? Do you have targeted workshops to rebuild their self-esteem?



12. Is your school a school of hope?

In Terry Wrigley's book *Schools of hope*, he suggests 'young people need schools which make each of them welcome, and which embody hope for a better future, an experience of democratic interaction, and a vision of social justice. In my vast experience of working with almost 260,000, my estimate is that 25% of young people leave school without real hope for their future after school.'

Have our schools been driven towards efficiency rather than genuine improvement? What really matters: new targets to meet? Higher maths grades perhaps? Or caring creative learners, a future, a sense of justice, the welfare of the planet and its people?

13. How do you cater for different learning styles?

Just how are the individual learning needs and styles of each student assessed, prescribed and monitored? Why not spend years 7 and 8 using project-based activities to observe and assess the tendencies of each student? Why not ask students to solve problems, collaborate and innovate in order to help them, and your staff, better understand their preferred needs and styles?

14. How do you listen to every student voice?

I still visit schools that employ what I believe to be a largely outdated vehicle for student voice, in which one member of a class or year group represents an entire cohort. True, at least the school is trying to give students a voice, but many others have a voice that never gets heard using this system. Lots of staff and schools now are taking brave steps to use social media and in-house platforms which give young people a forum on which to share their concerns and lesson experiences.

15. What is the rank order of priorities of students at your school?

Have you ever gone to the trouble of trying to find out just what are students' priorities in life and school? I ask every single group of students I work with to identify and share their most important priorities in life: their feedback is both humbling and illuminating. Much can be learned by asking young people what they really care about, and what they worry about most.



16. Do students survive or thrive at your school?

Surely this is one of the most fundamental questions we can ask of ourselves and our school: just what are you setting your students up for – a life of mediocrity or, even worse, anonymity? Or do you and your staff provide young people with the opportunity to live a life of excellence and self-realisation?

17. How do you know you're really making an impact on each and every young person?

John Hattie's work on attribution has highlighted the need to help young people redefine the factors they can control to improve performance, rather than embracing things they have little or no control over. The same can be said of a teacher's influence: what can a teacher do to positively influence the behaviour and attitude of a young person? And how can they assess this impact and influence?

18. How do you know what your students' daily diet is? Has anyone on SLT shadowed a student for a whole day?

Just what do you and your staff do to monitor, evaluate and report on the journey of any given student? How do you go about observing, subjectively from a student's standpoint, but then objectively assessing what can be done to improve and embellish the experience of their journey through school? How can you measure and share these profound observations with your colleagues?



19. What are you not asking but should be?

By way of summary, I have saved my favourite question to last. How can you truly illuminate the learning of students at your school? In order to truly understand, empathise with and improve provision for your young people, what questions are you not asking which really you ought to be, every day, every week, every month, every year?

I sincerely hope you can use at least one of these thought-provoking questions to begin an authentic and powerful process. A process through which you truly engage and understand the wonderful young people that grace every school and every lesson, with the vision and deep commitment to improve their educational journeys and the overall impact on their future.



15 steps to transformation

*Katie Scott,
Portslade Aldridge Community Academy*

Your first headship being the fourth appointee as principal in three years is quite a challenge, as Katie Scott explains

When I was appointed principal to Portslade Aldridge Community Academy for September 2015 I was the fourth appointee in three years. Consequently the governing body were extremely cautious, and rightly so. My assessment process included being observed in my existing school.

The academy, in one of the more socially disadvantaged areas of Brighton, had opened in 2013 and by the time of my appointment

the last substantive principal had been removed in the kind of deal none of us ever want: the academy had been served a financial notice to improve; attendance was the worst in the city and the school was only 40% full. Crucially, another RI from Ofsted would almost certainly put the school in special measures, which ultimately would have made recruitment of both students and staff even more challenging, if not impossible.

The reputation locally was one of poor educational outcomes and poor behaviour. As a first headship these added up to a significant risk. I didn't think then

that there were any silver bullets for school improvement, and I still don't. But what I did see was young people and teachers who had enormous potential and deserved better.

Two years on, Ofsted has judged us 'good'. More importantly, our progress 8 score of 0.31 is the strongest in the city (with exception of a Catholic school which has a non-restricted catchment area) and above average nationally. In terms of our attainment, maths is 2nd in the city and above the national average (significantly above Fischer Family Trust - FFT5). English attainment is also above the national





average. By the end of my first year as head the LA had recognised us as having the most improved attendance rates in the city (second overall). Most people who have known the school over a period of time describe it as having been 'transformed'. Our year 7 intake doubled this year, and I am confident we will fill our PAN for the first time in the school's history in September 2018.

How was this achieved?

When asked how so much has been achieved in short a time, there is no single answer. There has been an eye on the school's long term sustainable improvement, while rapidly addressing the progress deficits that resulted from RI teaching over time. Doing one without the other always means that a group of children in the school is effectively written off, and that simply isn't and wasn't acceptable. I have therefore asked a great deal of my staff.

Every school is unique and therefore what works in one circumstance won't necessarily be effective somewhere else. How-

ever, as someone who likes a list, here are 15 of the key actions that I believe had an impact:

- » A focus on doing the basics well: a consistent approach to key aspects of teaching and learning that support all teachers, from those training with us to the members of the leadership team who are on duty every break time. An example of this is a standard first slide in school registration, which has a task for students to complete in silence while the register is taken.
- » Being decisive and setting high expectations from the outset. The school bell during my interview days had been startlingly loud. From day one, the bells were removed completely. I told the staff we would expect students to look at clocks and be responsible, rather than having a loud bell. I also banned phones inside the building. Both were met with incredulity from some. We did it as a team, it worked. Demonstrating the art of the possible in some small way allows people to begin to imagine what other previously unimagined goals might be achievable.
- » A review of target setting to ensure that we expect the absolute best from all students. This involved battling some expectations, within and beyond the school, of 'good enough' being good enough.
- » Holding staff to account through performance management. We are developing this further: departments now have collective targets, so everyone has even more of a vested interest in ensuring maximum progress from year 7 onwards.
- » A concerted effort to transform grey corridors into art galleries of colour that display students' creative work in as professional way as we could afford, to show how proud we are of their work.



- » Developing a culture of public rewards. The first end of term assembly had many students refusing to come to collect their certificates (no actual rewards were given). Now, all students come up to have their achievements and progress recognised.
- » Leading by example: all SLT members being prepared to teach and go on school trips (including outward bound ones) and participate.
- » Introduction of innovative features into the curriculum. Once a fortnight we have a mixed-age choice curriculum with a wide range of activities to choose from. This allows time for intervention for year 11 and an engaging offer amidst an ever narrowing timetable.
- » Being prepared to make difficult decisions for the right reasons, even when some of those around you would prefer to opt for the path of least resistance, be they staff or parents.
- » The inevitable showdown with key parents whose expectations and ambitions for their children did not match ours. This was time consuming and, at times, hard. However, reputations are built on key battles: knowing which ones to fight and where to hold your line are invaluable, even if it does result in making the national press. Standards are standards.
- » Recognising people's strengths and weaknesses and ensuring the line management models are shaped by people's needs rather than a one-size-fits-all model.
- » Not being afraid to have difficult conversations, or hear difficult messages.
- » Thanking staff, and meaning it.
- » Reflecting on my journey from deputy head to headteacher and forgiving myself for not getting it right all the time. Being prepared to apologise to the staff when something hasn't worked out (especially when it wasn't my fault - ultimately I am accountable).

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- » Several well-worn narratives that were often repeated: 'If it is not good enough for your child, it is not good enough for "our" children' has been my mantra for a long time, and it has served me well.

Lucky breaks

Despite some extremely challenging circumstances, there were also what I consider to be lucky breaks. A staff body that were willing to give me a chance (they had every reason to believe I wouldn't be there long); individuals who made choices about whether they wanted to be part of the team that was going to make a success of the school, quickly and professionally; a union rep within school that does the job for all the right reasons; the ability to appoint my own deputy at the end of year one, who 'got' what I was trying to achieve and was able to deliver as rapidly as I required; and appointing my own PA at the end of year two. Most importantly, the academy has an amazing group of young people who have cast off the previous reputation and embraced the ambition of being the best school we can be, and be proud of it.

We continue to face challenges, which school doesn't? The adjustments of being part of a MAT as opposed to a stand-alone academy; the continuing challenges of an inherited financial situation that will take time to rectify despite two restructures; and the day-to-day circumstances of students and staff that are some of the most challenging yet rewarding aspects of the job. All this in the context of navigating the rapidly changing landscape of qualifications and accountability measures.



Considering your first headship?

My advice to anyone considering a first headship is: know why you are doing it; choose the school as much as they choose you; be prepared to work hard and know that rapid school transformation is possible – but as with all things, it comes at a cost.

Choosing the right time to undertake this challenge is crucial. Look after your immediate team, so they can look after the staff, so they in turn can teach the students as effectively as possible each and every lesson. Recognise that time is our most precious resource and creating it wherever possible, as well as supporting people in developing more effective ways of using theirs, is crucial. But also be realistic: teaching is a job that requires time to do well.

Once in post, experience teaches you very quickly who tells

you what you want to hear, who is awkward whatever the request, and who will offer you a fair challenge when you deserve and need it. Ego is a dangerous business in school leadership and no-one has time for vanity projects. Do things for the right reasons. Knowing when to push for that extra impact or progress, and when to say, 'this is good enough for today; it can be perfect tomorrow', comes in time.

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Strong professional relationships boosted by clear values, routines and rituals

*Wesley Davis,
Dixons McMillan Academy*

Schools are demanding places to work where, at times, emotions can run high for all concerned, which can result in a negative environment. That is why, I believe, strong professional relationships are fundamentally needed to create outstanding provision for young people to thrive. I am determined this will be the case for anyone who learns and works at Dixons McMillan Academy.

Our school culture has been influenced by my visits to the charter schools in the US, as well as what we call the 'Dixons difference' within our own trust.

Some key beliefs form the foundations for the school culture at Dixons McMillan:

- » Everyone can get better and make progress; scholars and staff are expected to have a growth mindset, to learn and understand more tomorrow than they do today.
- » We want staff and scholars to be highly employable: to have the habits which will help them gain and sustain a rewarding career.
- » Staff and scholars must have the skills and understanding to build strong relationships with a range of different people.



Routines and rituals build up the culture

From these drivers, we have created a school that builds up the culture to succeed with clear values, routines, rituals and language. The high expectations of charter schools, blended with the Dixons difference, are creating a highly successful and popular academy in the middle of Bradford.

Many of the successful schools in the US, and indeed in the UK, have a clear values-driven system that is understood and implemented by all stakeholders. So, unsurprisingly, the first decision made with the original team of 10 staff was the academy's values. Discussing and defining the values that have ultimately shaped and defined almost every conversation and decision in the academy's history has been a powerful exercise. The original staff selected excellence, positivity and respect as our three core values. All members of the academy can articulate how the organisation defines and operates these values. It is almost impossible to visit Dixons McMillan and not see the values on walls, on pull-up banners and on digital displays, but fundamentally you see them in action as scholars and staff operationalise the values in their interactions with each other.

'Family dining' exemplifies our values in action. Lunchtimes are a very special part of the academy day. The academy value of respect is demonstrated where we enjoy family dining and scholars serve each other, and staff, during this time. It is a powerful, positive experience for all concerned.

All members of Dixons McMillan receive a thorough induction in the values. For parents, this takes the form of a series of evening appointments before year 6 primary students become year 7 scholars. Our values are referred to in every collective learning session (morning lecture/assembly), every staff meeting and every training event.

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We have rituals to uphold the values, creating a shared and largely predictable school day, bringing



the community together and building professional relationships across the academy. This involves whole-staff practice at least twice a week (like world-class athletes and musicians, we practise until we don't get it wrong).

At 08.02 each day, staff raise their hands. Close to 600 scholars find their allocated space in their natural state of silence and await further instruction while their advisors check that they are ready to learn (equipment, uniform and attitude).

Our scholars are children and we fully expect and accept that, like adults, they will make mistakes. It is our job to ensure these mistakes are rectified and good learning habits are developed, improved and sustained so that the scholars have every chance to gain and sustain a rewarding career of their choice.

Our routines for learning are clearly evident once you are in a lesson at Dixons McMillan, though we do not have a set lesson format or ways of teaching. You will see scholars doing group work, working independently, working in the ibase (library) or in IT spaces. However, regardless of the staff member's mode of learning, the expectations and tools to ensure that there are no missed opportunities are consistently used for effective formative assessment to address misconceptions. At a basic level, each desk has its own equipment basket containing items needed for the lesson, such as glue sticks. This saves time handing out glue sticks and collecting them back.



Communicating with teachers

In the baskets you will also find the traffic light 'prism', which is the first way that a scholar will communicate with a member of staff. All scholars will set their prism to green at the start of the lesson to show they are confident with the content and instructions that are set. Scholars can then reset their prism at any time during the lesson to signal they are finding the content or instructions unclear and need additional support. Teachers can use this information to amend the pitch of the lesson for individuals, or the class as a whole, if needed. Obviously, teachers do not just accept the scholars' self-assessment, this is interrogated. The prisms support the no-hands-up policy, along with random directed questioning and 'pop-corning' for those rare times a teacher needs a scholar to volunteer a response.

Everyone has a legacy sentence

All scholars and staff have their own 'sentence': a sentence that they would want someone to say in remembrance of them, which describes their legacy and their positive contribution in the world. My sentence, 'he inspired me to inspire others', arose from being inspired to be a teacher of religious education by my RE teacher at school, Mrs Thompson.

That connection between daily actions and daily learning to a long-term ambition is important, and we often refer to our sentences when motivation may drop with an individual; eg: 'what have you done today that will help you achieve your sentence?' On their first day at Dixons McMillan, every new scholar constructs their sentence in order to give them their 'artefact' which they carry around with them in their planner.

The sentence allows a connection between everyday actions and a long-term goal. It demands a thoughtful response from our scholars about what they value. Often the scholars' sentences refer to the jobs they want to get in the future and the impact of these jobs on other people.

Our culture for aspiration is evident and effective, but it is labour intensive in terms of induction, rationalisation – and checking that what we think is happening is actually happening. Robust quality assurance systems ensure we do what we say we do. The key learning from the American charter schools and other successful UK schools, including Dixons City Academy, the first Dixons school, is to do what you say you are going to do, and do it well.

Life without levels – not ‘measuring progress’, but evaluating learning

*Clare Hill,
Twynham School*

Clare Hill, director of mathematics, Twynham School, explains the rationale and benefits of eschewing measurement as a force in the curriculum

At Twynham School we have undergone a deliberately slow and considered process to develop a worthwhile approach to teaching without levels. This process ultimately led us to a point where we could have a meaningful dialogue with staff about not ‘measuring progress’ – but still evaluating learning. In education, how often do we hear people say, weighing the pig won’t make it any fatter? Yet, possibly because I am a mathematician, I have used data extensively in my work as a head of faculty because they provided me with an (easy) snapshot of the ‘learning’ that is taking place. Now with hindsight I can clearly see all the pitfalls (which have been widely discussed).

In my own teaching I often come up against the cognitive dissonance that is created when my students fare badly in a test de-



spite the fact that through my own, in-class, formative assessment they have demonstrated to me that they understand what they are doing. However, on the occasions they can’t demonstrate their understanding in class, I adapt my teaching accordingly. I simply don’t need a set of numbers to do this. This is responsive teaching.

Responsive teaching

Our educational philosophy at Twynham School is based on the research developed by our previous headteacher, Dr Terry Fish, for his PhD on Responsive Teaching (1994). In fact this idea of responsive teaching is echoed by

Dylan Wiliam’s sentiments when he said that he wished he had not called his research assessment for learning and instead called it responsive teaching.

This has been embedded into the vernacular for as long as I have been here (11 years) and, as far as is possible, there is a common understanding of what is meant by that. Introduced and led by Dr Fish, it has been universally subscribed to by the leadership team, which is now led by Jy Taylor. I have absolutely no doubt that this philosophy of teaching and learning will remain at the heart of what we do for a long time.

Our CPD has always focused on the twin aspects of responsive teaching and the disciplined mind (Gardner, 2006). In summary, in the disciplined mind, teachers firstly identify the essential topics within the discipline; they then spend time on these new topics, studying them deeply; following this they approach the topic in a number of ways and lastly develop ‘performances of understanding’ – encouraging students to use their knowledge in new and novel situations.

This sounds like everything Tim Oates outlined in his rationale for moving away from national curriculum levels. With the announcement that levels would be abandoned, we found ourselves in a perfect position to be adventurous and innovative with how we approached key

stage 3 without the constraints of levels.

No more flight paths

Initially we were unclear as a leadership team what the exact journey would look like. We debated structures extensively at leadership meetings. It would be impossible to list every variation we examined, but to give a flavour, some of the debates centred around assessing the grade that the students are on track for, rather than what they have attained. Within this grade, they will move through developing and securing, to mastered – this is clearly a flight path. Another idea was to give a target grade for the end of year 11 and a grade as to how they are progressing towards that target – another flight path. Later meetings discussed moving away from measuring progress and towards describing

what the students are currently doing, and what they need to be doing in order to improve their understanding. We frequently returned to the advice in the final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels (September 2015), which stressed:

‘Changing the culture of levels is not only the key to implementing the new curriculum, but is the key to raising standards by enriching learning and pupil motivation and enabling teachers to grow professionally and make better use of their time, knowledge and skills. This is an opportunity the profession cannot afford to miss.’

We became clear that we were simply not going to use a flight path in any disguise. So, keeping the principles of responsive teaching at the fore, we asked



our curriculum leaders, working with their teams, to deconstruct their key stage 3 curriculum – focusing on the essential skills and concepts required for success at key stage 4. To help with this deconstruction we returned to the original basis for the national curriculum – to identify what students needed to know, understand and be able to do.

In deconstructing the KS3 curriculum, we returned to the original basis for the national curriculum – to identify what students needed to know, understand and be able to do

The mathematics department had already been through this

process; it was useful for other curriculum leaders to see how a department had successfully managed this deconstruction and how it had informed our teaching. But it was important to remain mindful that this was a huge change for everyone and we know that change can be challenging and messy.

By creating a dialogue we could respond to curriculum leaders' concerns and ensure that everyone believed they could contribute to the process.

One particular dialogue that went through this process was the use of CATS and standardised test scores to identify students of differing prior achievements. Our creative arts and PE colleagues felt that this would not be a useful indicator in their subject areas. After going

through the cycle, we decided that curriculum areas could identify students in a way which was useful to them. We were adhering to the NAHT's advice:

- » Be brave – do what's best for your pupils' learning.
- » Question every element of your assessment process and procedures.
- » Ask yourself, 'will it help the children to progress and the teachers to target their teaching?'

As a leadership team we still weren't clear on what tracking would look like – but we kept our nerve! We had kept the journey transparent up to this point, by expressing our doubts and recognising that change would happen at a different pace for everyone and may look different in different curriculum areas.



This removed the pressure to produce a new, complete system that may have been rushed and overly stressful for colleagues. Moreover, any tracking system would force our curriculum leaders back into thinking about measures – and away from creating an innovative curriculum to develop a disciplined mind.

Sustained conversation

What has resulted from this process at Twynham is a deep and sustained conversation about conceptual understanding and what learning looks like over time. In many respects the process we have been through over the past two years closely reflects SSAT’s four pillars of principled curriculum design.

Discussion of what the content of the curriculum should look like feeds into how we deliver our curricula and how we continue to review and tweak this process

Had we adopted a flight path, I believe our curriculum leaders would have been less free to critically evaluate the intent of their

new curriculum (something that HMCI Amanda Spielman has just written about). A flight path would have stifled discussion of what the content of the curriculum should look like: and at Twynham it was exactly that discussion that fed into how we deliver our curricula and how we continue to review and tweak this process.

For me, the whole experience has been both liberating and exciting and I look forward to teaching year 7 and 8 maths above everything else. These students are no longer in vertically grouped sets and we no longer hear the phrase ‘bottom set maths’, which has to be a good thing. At Twynham we can no longer weigh the pig, because we don’t have a set of numbers with which to do so. And yet I believe that despite this, or because of it, our teaching will improve and so will our students’ learning. Without data, it is absolutely critical that our teachers have a strong understanding of the curriculum design and excellent responsive teaching practices. Our CPD is therefore focused entirely on this, centred around Dylan Wiliam’s model of teacher learning communities.

We aim to be formative and responsive in both our teaching and our leadership.

We have in-depth discussions about what students are learning rather than the progress they are making.

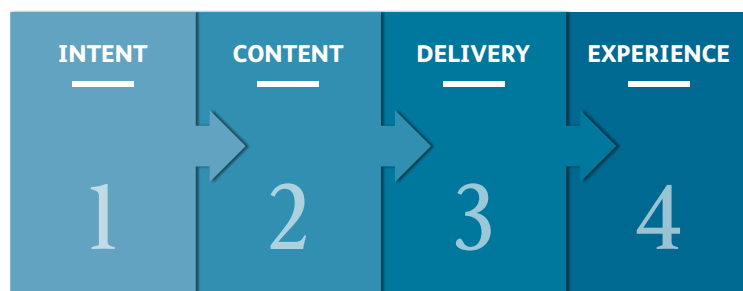
And through benchmarking processes focused on what students know, understand and are able to do, we are creating an ongoing discussion of both subject content and pedagogy to ensure a high quality curriculum which engages and challenges all our students.

We can no longer weigh the pig, because we don’t have a set of numbers with which to do so.... Despite this, or because of it, our teaching will improve and so will our students’ learning

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4 PILLARS OF PRINCIPLED CURRICULUM DESIGN



Getting students to behave like mathematicians

*Nilam Patel,
Canons High School*

Nilam Patel, KS3 mathematics curriculum leader, Canons High School, explains the rationale, detail and emerging success of a fascinating action research project

I think many people would agree that mathematics in the UK comes attached with a stigma, causing many of our citizens (including professionals and this means teachers too) to feel anxious when faced with completing mathematical tasks. I believe that this is directly linked to how we teach mathematics at school. Allow me to explain why.

If we inspect what a mathematician does on a daily basis, and I mean by walking into a university and observing a mathematics academic (outside of their lectures), we would see them on a daily basis exploring, reasoning, justifying, deducing. My personal favourite is screwing up pages of work (which sometimes represent a huge amount of effort) because they realised they made a mistake or their discovery is flawed, and starting all over again. This is the future of mathematics and one I experienced a huge amount of anxiety from myself when I attempted to study mathematics at degree level and to a certain extent at A-Level too.

I regularly hear teachers commenting about the struggles they have with students at A-Level who don't learn unless they are 'spoon fed'. I hear similar comments about GCSE and KS3 students. So why do we insist on holding on to the spoon? Surely at some point we have to entrust them with the responsibility



ty of not only doing mathematics but being mathematicians?

Of course, we have to consider they are not yet adults. But why don't we let them explore, deduce, reason, justify and most importantly get things wrong, learn from their mistakes and start again? For me developing resilience through the carefully guided art of learning from mistakes is the essence of teaching and learning mathematics.

Why don't we let them explore, deduce, reason, justify and most importantly get things wrong, learn from their mistakes and start again?

Vital to grasp the prerequisites

This brings me on to my next point, which is all about the sequential nature of mathematics. Many, if not all, mathematical concepts have a prerequisite, and the degree to which that prerequisite has been mastered informs how well the follow-on concept can be accessed. For many students, the lack of mastery of prerequisites forms a block for them to confidently continue with their maths learning. This highlights a huge problem: essential opportunities to learn from mistakes are being overlooked.

This sequential property is almost unique to mathematics. Allow me to contextualise. A student is absent for the lesson in which the class was taught the meaning of equivalent fractions (or the student was present but failed to master the concept). In the following lesson, adding and subtracting fractions is being taught but it is too hard for this student to access (because it requires mastery of equivalent fractions). So, accessing any concepts requiring mastery of equivalent fractions (e.g. adding and subtracting mixed numbers, converting fractions to percentages, etc.) in the future becomes particularly difficult which creates feelings of anxiety. In this student's mind, maths comes to equal anxiety and low confidence.

But you have a classroom full of students and most of them have mastered equivalent fractions so you have to move on, right? Otherwise at the very least the gifted and talented students will not be challenged, so they lose out. Often, teaching professionals use the word 'challenge' only when discussing gifted and talented provision. But for me challenge is applicable to all students because, regardless of prior attainment, students are engaged if they are regularly and appropriately challenged. When talking to children about challenge I often use this question to find out if they feel they are being stretched: 'Do you find the difficulty of the work too

easy, too hard or just right?'. Of course sometimes with children you have to question a little further to substantiate their response but if it is 'just right', I feel confident that I am challenging my students appropriately.

I often use this question to find out if students feel they are being stretched: 'Do you find the difficulty of the work too easy, too hard or just right?'

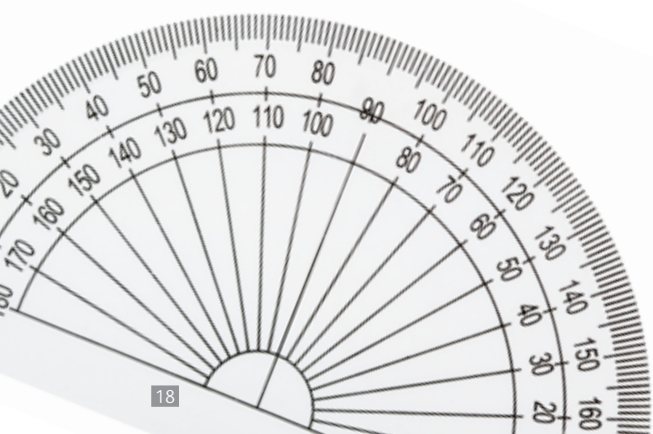
In order to do this though, I have to take into account the prior mathematical learning experiences and attainment of all of my students, who have come from a variety of feeder primary schools. So for me, to allow all of my students to behave like mathematicians and be appropriately stretched I need to ensure that this equation is balanced:

$$\text{Mathematical} \\ (\text{Confidence} + \text{Mastery}) \\ = \text{Appropriate} (\text{Challenge} + \text{Pace})$$

With this in mind, at Canons High School, personalised maths learning was born. For just over a year we have been trialling a scheme of learning based on sound pedagogical resources and differentiation.

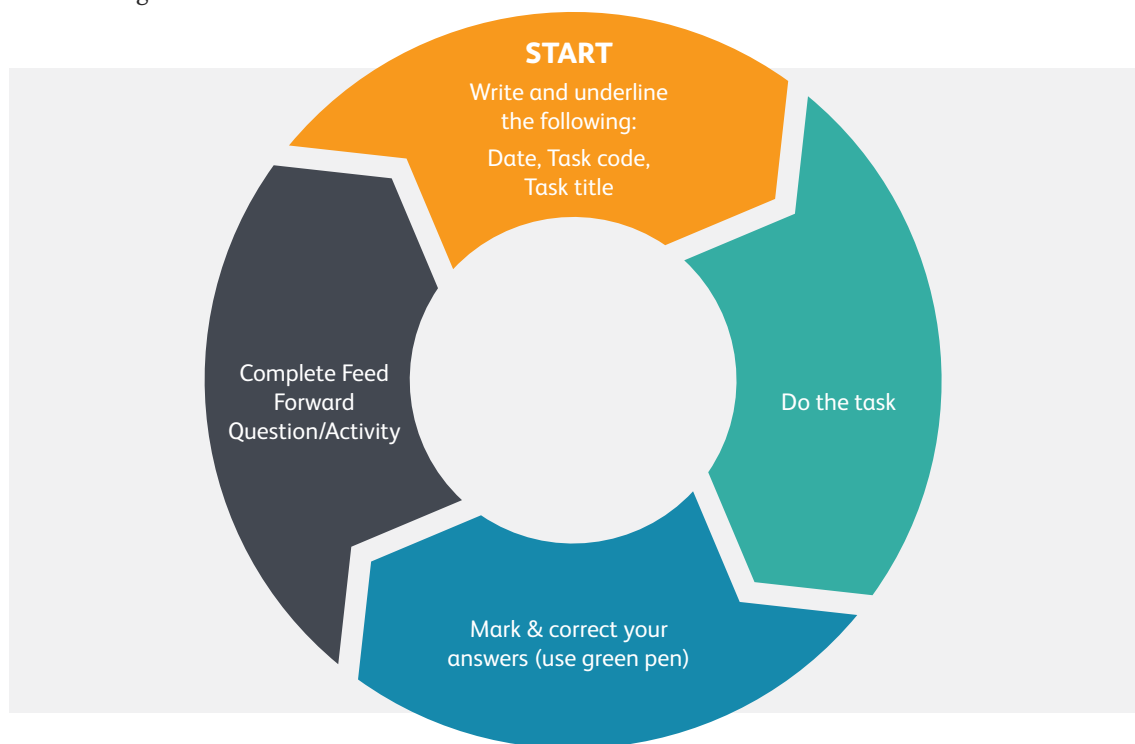
The resources are designed to allow students to be mathematicians by exploring, deducing, reasoning, justifying and thus understanding mathematics in depth. The learning system allows students to work through differentiated activities that cater for all prior attainment profiles that may be found in a mixed attainment secondary school class.

It has been built with assessment for learning in mind, to ensure that students master concepts in small steps (making and owning as many mistakes as they need to) before they move on to their next task. They work at a pace suitable for them, in a workshop style classroom, with the teacher modelling and questioning in smaller groups (which are flexible and fluid, from lesson to lesson and topic to topic) as opposed to leading from the board.



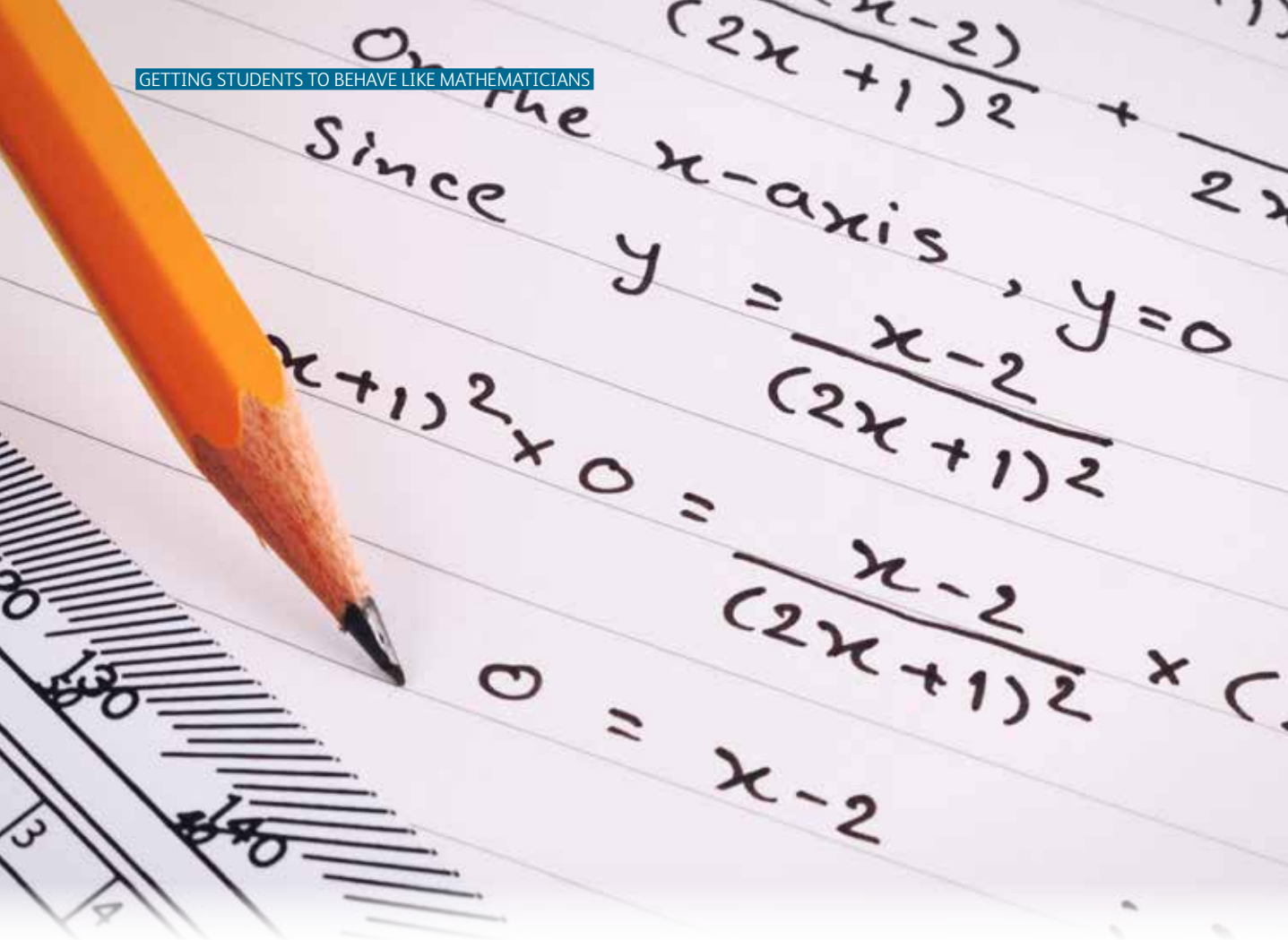
Personalised maths learning – how does it work?

Students are provided with a list of coded tasks (differentiated based on that student's prior attainment). They have to complete the task (which may be a guided exploration task, a practice task, a problem to solve, a game, a group work discussion task, a video tutorial or an online lesson). For each task, they have to follow this flow diagram:



As they work through their tasks, they complete a checklist to help themselves stay organised. It looks like this:

Tutor Group	Name:		Start date	End date		
	UNIT 2 - Number Operations (Mental & Written) & Calculator Methods					
Task collected?	Task	Task Objective	Task done?	Task Marked?	Feed Forward Question done?	Teacher Sign
	2227	Practise number bonds to 5				
	1356	Practise counting				
	MM	Number facts and doubles 1				
	MM	Counting on and counting back				
	MM	Counting on over 10 and 20				
	1520	Practise finding the difference				
	249	Learn the number bonds to 10, 7, 9 and 15				
		Practise number bonds to 10				



With this scheme, our students learn to explore, reason, justify and deduce because this is how our resources are designed.

- » They learn to take responsibility for their learning and progress because they choose their own homework from this list of tasks.
- » They learn to be resourceful by collecting necessary equipment.
- » They learn to be resilient because they have the freedom to make mistakes.
- » They master a concept before moving on to the next because they have the flexibility of working at their own pace (this is true for when they are absent from school too of course).

In other words, they behave like mathematicians, with no ceiling to their progress. They can complete as many of these lists of tasks (difficulty range of tasks goes all the way up to the higher GCSE curriculum) as they want. Many of our students do go above and beyond and as a result their progress mirrors this, as does their confidence and opinion of mathematics.

Evidence informed practice

This project is being run as action research and we are taking care to attempt to gather evidence to support the theoretical premise posed above. This research has included questionnaires, focus groups and interviews with staff and students as well as use of a variety of data. We have seen positive responses in the completion of homework, attitudes towards maths, behaviour in class and students feeling appropriately challenged. For 2017 we are focusing on the impact on student attainment, acknowledging the difficulty involved in unpicking the many factors that influence that. We all think we will get the evidence of impact, though at this stage it is too early to say.

I know readers will have questions about the resources we have used, how we manage to teach so many small groups within a classroom and indeed how students respond to this scheme. I have answers to all of those questions, so please do get in touch with me at npatel2@canons.harrow.sch.uk and better still, come and have a look at it in action.

Comprehensive use of pupil premium pays dividends

*Sarah Bonar,
Sacred Heart Catholic School*

An imaginative, and deep, application of PP funds is reaping its rewards, as Sarah Bonar, assistant head, Sacred Heart Catholic School, explains

Sacred Heart Catholic School of Camberwell, South London, gained the 'best secondary school' award in this year's Pupil Premium Awards, for demonstrating innovative use of pupil funding in directly supporting its pupils.

Our focus was to counter the barriers faced by our disadvantaged pupils, which include: English as a second language, no experience of higher education within the family, and a lack of resources within the home to support education.

The key to success has been strong teaching and clear accountability for any scheme or initiative we fund. All staff recognise that being disadvantaged must not be seen as any barrier to success. We believe our investment in pastoral care and targeted interventions throughout key stage 3 have en-



sured that our disadvantaged learners are confident, literate and prepared for their studies in key stage four and beyond.

Investing in literacy

There is a strong correlation between disadvantaged pupils and low reading levels on entry, so the school has invested in a range of literacy programmes to raise Y7-9 reading ages, including:

» From the moment of entry a pupil with a below average reading age score attends reading classes before school, paid for by pupil premium funding.

- » They have also taken part in a Kindle reading project, introduced with the help of Audible UK, which is proving to be very successful.
- » A peer-assisted ('reading buddies') learning scheme is run at lunchtimes.
- » A Lexia programme helps struggling readers in year 7.

All reading ages are constantly monitored, not only by the SEN department but also by SMT, to ensure that the money being spent is showing an increase in pupil reading ages.



Other additional support

Many of our disadvantaged children on entry have low key stage 2 scores and part of our pupil premium is used to ensure that we have a very generous pupil/teacher ratio to support these children in significantly smaller classes than usual (typically about 12 pupils).

To compensate for lack of space at home, pupils have access to the school library from 7am to 6pm and the opportunity to attend school on a Saturday morning. Two-thirds (67%) of year 7s qualifying for pupil premium currently use the library during the extended hours, as do some PP pupils in all other years.

Two-thirds of year 7s qualifying for pupil premium use the library during the extended hours, as do some PP pupils in all other years

The school runs a homework support class every night: pupils who are known to have difficulties completing homework are closely monitored to ensure they attend. No excuse for not completing homework is accepted.

Mentoring schemes provide one-to-one help for pupils on pupil premium who are under-

achieving. These include peer mentoring, where current sixth formers help pupils in Y7-11, and senior management mentoring, where an SMT member works with each underachieving Y11 pupil to improve motivation and give help with learning.

Communication skills

As many of our pupils also need to develop their social skills in order to gain the confidence to succeed, we are continually developing a spoken English programme.

In 2016 we invested part of the pupil premium in programmes such as 'debate mate', in which pupils with ESL and low ability pupils were actively encouraged to take part (there is a very strong correlation with our disadvantaged cohort). Over 100 pupils from years 7-10 are currently involved (60 of the current de-

bate mate cohort qualify for pupil premium). It has made a noticeable difference in our pupils' willingness to speak in public and voice an opinion, and pupils on the debate mate programme get better at listening to counter arguments and arguing effectively when required to do so in class. Pupils actively enjoy this activity. We have also used Speakers Trust to help promote public speaking.

Raising aspirations

To compensate for the lack of professional figures in our pupils' lives, we run talks on raising aspiration, using external speakers: these are well attended. In-house work on employability and widening participation takes into account each child's needs. Partnerships with external organisations to raise pupils' aspirations and develop social skills include Amazon Audible, Barclays, Social Mobility Foundation, Debate Mate, Rare Potential, Big Voice London, KPMG and many more. They have been involved in events in school, offering work experience, mentoring and internships, and they give our pupils an insight into the professional and other workplaces and the skills that can be required.

All our pupils are encouraged to aim high: for example eight of our year 12 disadvantaged pupils are currently on our Oxbridge programme. In the past four years, two disadvantaged pupils from our small sixth form have achieved places at Oxbridge colleges.

All year 12 pupils can attend summer schools, internships and courses throughout the year. In 2015/16, every Y12 pupil took part in either a summer school or an internship. Every March, a revision weekend for year 12 is heavily subsidised to ensure all pupils can attend.

Being disadvantaged at Sacred Heart is never a barrier for children being able to participate in an activity: the money will always be found. We are fortunate



that the strong pupil/teacher ratio enables us to know them as individuals.

In 2015/16, every Y12 pupil took part in either a summer school or an internship

Parents are encouraged to develop a greater understanding of how the school operates through initiatives such as 'come cook with me', in which parents and children work together in a home economics lesson.

Some pupil premium outcomes

All the current 35 pupils in year 13 who have been on pupil premium from year 7 have a place at either university or higher apprenticeship. In 2017, three pupils were interviewed for a place at either Oxford or Cambridge; two gained places on a prestigious BFI course to make a short

film; one won the regional final of a public speaking competition and another is taking part in the London Debating regional finals; and another has an apprenticeship with a leading advertising agency (only five out of 400 applicants accepted). These are just some of the many achievements of this cohort who have been with us for seven years – testament, we believe, to effective use of pupil premium.

As the school's headteacher Serge Cefai put it in addressing the pupils: 'No matter what your background, no matter where you live or what your income is – if you receive the right support and excellent teaching from your school and you are willing to put in hard work yourself, you can achieve whatever you want to. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.'

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Sound Training, SSAT's Leading Literacy Partner, is an award winning company working across the UK and beyond to improve literacy and achievement. Lexonik by Sound Training is the only literacy intervention to impact on literacy rapidly and effectively. With over 50,000 students taught to date, participation in the six-week programme has delivered an average increase in reading age of 27 months.

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"Lexonik Leap EAL training was one of the most valuable pieces of training I have received for EAL teaching. Remarkably simple to use and deliver with quick results." Bodmin College, SSAT member

SSAT member schools are entitled to a 10% discount on the price per pupil.

Sound Training would like to invite SSAT members to attend a dinner in January 2018 in a choice of two locations, the North East or South East. Express your interest in attending by emailing adviseme@ssatuk.co.uk.

For more information call Sound Training on **01642 424 298** or email enquiries@lexonik.co.uk.

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Unifrog connects students to the best university courses, apprenticeships, college courses and school leaver programmes, while making it easy for teachers to track their progress. They are unique in allowing students to compare every post-16 and post-18 opportunity in the UK as well as a huge number of English language university courses overseas. They can reduce staff admin time by more than 40%, and have an impressive track record of reducing NEETs and increasing access to Oxbridge, the Russell Group and top school leaver programmes.

The Unifrog Application Management tools make the process of writing Personal Statements and Teacher References easier and more successful, marrying expert guidance with progress bars so that every student and teacher knows their next step. Younger years have access to a host of useful tools to record and develop their skills while considering which post-school pathways are most suitable for them. There is even have the facility for parents to access the platform if you wish!

"There was an initial staff fear towards adding another process - another 'log on'. This was to be expected, but Unifrog were so helpful in positively and patiently conveying the benefit this was going to bring to our school and to their workload. We're a massive 6th form - we have 400 students, we have over 38 different A-levels, collecting all the Subject References is an absolute organisational nightmare. Having one tool to seamlessly collate all that information was extremely helpful." City of London Academy Southwark, SSAT member

SSAT member schools are entitled to a 7.5% discount on the price per pupil.

For a no-obligation demonstration of Unifrog, call Daniel Keller on **020 3372 5991** or email daniel@unifrog.org.

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FutureDJs is an education focused agency delivering DBS screened and highly qualified DJ/Music Production Tutors nationwide via peripatetic lessons. Their unique programme of study is created by professionals to inspire future talent, starting at Key Stage 2 and running through to Key Stage, 5 in accordance with the new AQA and OCR GCSE music specifications.

Objectives and Opportunities For Students

- » Open the door to music for students
- » Show students new horizons and alternative opportunities in the music industry
- » Uncover hidden talents and passions
- » Develop focus, perseverance and dedication
- » Build self-confidence

FutureDJs encourage students to find their passion and embrace what they love and in doing so students will discover an inner confidence to strive for new frontiers in both their thinking and approach - this is often the catalyst for how originality is born! Originality breeds self worth, confidence, success and ultimately enterprise.

"I have seen first hand the transformative effect the use of DJing and MCing in the classroom can have upon learners." Dr Pete Dale, Senior Lecturer, Musics, MMU

"Having a platform like FutureDJs in schools for students is essential, valuable and proactive in assuring all students have the access to achieve and aspire." The Ferrers School, SSAT member

For more information call **020 8242 1674** or email interest@futuresdjs.org.

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As an SSAT member you can take advantage of a significant discount on SchoolHire's services

To take advantage of your SSAT partner discounted rate, call David Nevies at SchoolHire on **020 8371 0967** or email davidn@schoolhire.co.uk.

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Effective SEND provision targets specific needs with appropriate interventions

*Hannah Williamson and Tracey Kelly,
Excelsior Academy*

Our all-through academy has developed personalised packages to ensure effective provision for our learners with SEND, supported by CPD.

Since inception in 2008, Excelsior has maintained a higher than average SEND cohort. Nearly half, 43% of our SEND pupils are also EAL, adding complexity to a challenging context.

At the beginning of our journey we asked ourselves the following questions:

- » How effectively are we meeting the needs of our pupils with additional needs?
- » How do we know we are meeting their needs?

- » How diverse is the range of need?
- » Do we have an effective range of interventions and strategies to meet those diverse needs?
- » Are staff skilled enough to accurately identify and address these needs?
- » Do we need to investigate alternate forms of intervention to accommodate the, at times, significant needs of our learners?

In 2014 our newly appointed SENCo began by completing a whole-academy audit of all aspects of SEND provision, including staff views, teaching practice, procedures and policies, use of support staff and current interventions. The findings and subsequent report highlighted that existing inter-





ventions were not meeting the needs of all of our children. To a school that prides itself on being fully inclusive, this was unacceptable. Among the issues identified through this process, we identified two significant areas to prioritise: developing a consistent understanding of what constitutes effective intervention; and deciding how and when this is delivered to pupils.

So at the heart of our change in approach were streamlining policies, and implementing clear procedures and guidelines for identifying SEND. This has meant more rigorous reflection and evaluation on the tools for communication about our pupils. Staff are now much more aware of their own accountability, protocols and procedures for the referral of pupils causing concerns, and they have a much improved knowledge of the interventions that pupils are involved in.

Identification

A key element of effective provision is the strategy employed and the procedures in place to swiftly identify specific needs. As part of the significant time Excelsior has invested in this over the last four years, the academy audit included: teachers' understanding of codes and needs, support staff and their roles; training needs for both groups of staff; the process of identification; and the needs presenting the biggest challenges in the classroom.

The SENCo, as part of the academy wide teaching and learning team, co-ordinated whole staff training on SEND identification and provision, which

would be crucial in successful implementation of change. Feedback from CPL has been predominantly positive, but highlighted training needs for differentiation, behaviour for learning and EAL provision.

Interventions

Interventions are personalised, and run in the same format from primary through to key stage 5:

- » Small group withdrawal for 30 minutes on fine motor skills, spelling, phonics, reading, writing, numeracy, behaviour for learning
- » 1:1 withdrawal
- » In-class support for individuals and small groups
- » Art therapy
- » Psychotherapy
- » Forest schools
- » Apprenticeship programmes
- » Counselling.

Interventions, carefully matched to students' individual needs, enable staff and pupils to illuminate learning through engaging, effective and individualised experiences. The practical, life experiences involved enable us to successfully address individuals' areas of challenge or difficulty through the application of new skills. All of our pupils with additional needs and challenges now make at least good progress.

Case study 1: Forest school

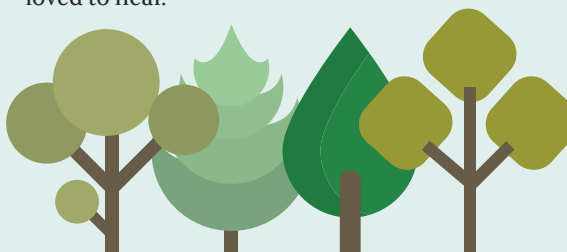
Forest school offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.

Pupil A was a very angry and frustrated young man, having arrived from the Middle East. Although his language skills were quickly improving, he could not express and articulate his feelings and thoughts. He had very little experience of formal education and could not read or write. Along with three other pupils, he had been identified as needing additional intervention for social, emotional and self-esteem issues. Initially, the intervention involved training these pupils to use the skills they were developing to support and mentor younger children in their forest school sessions: playing games, developing mini beast hunts, whittling with knives, lighting fires, den building and much more.

It quickly became clear that pupil A's self-confidence significantly affected his learning, and his level of engagement would depend on how quickly

ly he felt success. Over the four sessions, he grew in confidence, developing relationships with other pupils and the staff who were supporting him. He became more willing to be involved, have a go and take risks, as the sessions progressed. He communicated with his peers and the adults with increasing levels of confidence. His forest-related skills improved significantly.

The impact on his learning in school was very positive. He could stay calm and take time to express himself. He was much more confident and able to acknowledge that he was good at something. He did not present the earlier high levels of frustration. He engaged more positively with staff, who were able to talk positively to him about the project and how well he had been doing – which he loved to hear.



Case study 2: Art therapy

This type of intervention has been used to target pupils who have limited language skills, or those struggling with anxiety issues. It has enabled pupils to express how they feel by using a variety of different mediums which have not required them to talk about their feelings. The pupils who have been involved in these interventions have been able to deal with some big issues, and to speak to staff about them and on occasion to disclose. Having aired their problems and issues with the art therapist, pupils have been able to concentrate more on their learning. In some more extreme cases, serious issues have been identified and passed on to safeguarding for further support. Again there has been a positive impact on the pupils' learning.



Impact of bespoke interventions

Although this project is still in its infancy, having begun in September 2016, the evidence gathered indicates that there are significant benefits to the implementation of the range of interventions that Excelsior Academy offers. Staff delivering interventions keep detailed records which demonstrate pupil progress within and across sessions. Impact is analysed frequently to ensure intervention is successful – and where pupil progress is identified as not swift enough interventions are reviewed and adapted.





A fresh approach to work experience

*Francesca Hall,
Evelyn Grace Academy*

Francesca Hall, careers lead, Ark Evelyn Grace Academy, explains the rationale behind its 'Careers and University Success Programme'

Four years ago, Professor Alison Wolf's review of vocational education suggested that work experience should be an integral part of programmes of study for all 16-19 year olds. Further, that schools and colleges should be encouraged to prioritise longer internships for older students, while the government removed

their statutory duty to provide every young person at KS4 with a standard amount of work experience. The raising of the participation age ensured that all students now stay in education until they are 18. This means that those who go on to study at vocational FE colleges after year 11 have an element of relevant work experience in their vocational courses.

After Ark Evelyn Grace Academy (EGA) opened in 2008, its first year 10 cohort went through a traditional week-long work

experience in 2013. The programme had varied success, reflecting the diversity of the employers' offers. Some students benefited from a well-structured programme with interesting and varied activities to engage in and learn from. Others were given less meaningful tasks to perform and had little interaction with colleagues in the workplace as they stacked shelves, form filled or filed.

Access to placements was also a challenge, with other schools in the borough trying to organise



work experience for their students in the same period.

These points are very important in our decision to revolutionise our approach to work experience. So we decided to take a more innovative and varied approach to work experience. It was agreed that:

- » For students who went on to join our sixth form and study A-level courses, we would aim to have targeted, high quality placements.
- » Students on the sixth form 'IT professional pathway' would have in-built work experience.
- » And year 10 would have work-related learning which would begin to immerse them in the world of work.

Broader insights for year 10

We believed that the right opportunities would give students broader insights into a wide range of careers, a real taste of enterprise and better understanding of the skills and qualities needed to be successful in the workplace.

'Employability week', the culmination each year of our Careers and University Success Programme, is run in conjunction with Entrepreneurs in Action (past winners of the Queens Award for Enterprise). It has become a key aspect of our work-related learning provision for year 10 over the last four years.



Preparing for employability week

Employability week is scheduled for the latter part of the summer term. One week before, to fuel aspiration and stimulate thinking about future choices, every year 10 student has a university visit.

During employability week all year 10 students, accompanied by key members of staff, decamp to the local Lambeth College, which generously hosts the week. This comes at the end of significant preparation, with assemblies and tutor sessions throughout the year to help engage students and build understanding of how to get the most out of the week. There is an expectation that everyone wears business attire.

It works. Well ahead of the week, even students who occasionally try to flout uniform rules can be heard discussing and checking with staff that what they are intending to wear is appropriate. Those who sometimes find themselves in late detention take responsibility for planning their journey to the college to ensure they arrive on time. Students are also given guidance and time to structure and produce their CV ahead of this important week.

Employability week has proved to be very worthwhile, with a variety of positive effects on students. The school would normally fund the week but last year, thankfully, the Walcot Foundation supported half the costs, match funded by the school (we are looking to apply again this year).

What happens during employability week?

Employability week is designed to be inclusive, interactive and motivating. It aims to build the confidence of all. Students have the opportunity to hear from inspirational keynote speakers who have taken different routes to their careers. Coaching by trained facilitators on CV writing, social media networking and interview techniques is an integral part of the week. Other highlights include:

- » Speed interviewing: each student has an interview with up to three professional recruiters who give individualised feedback.
- » Career carousel insights: representatives from a variety of careers, including construction, finance, the police and IT consultants, hold QA sessions and provide personal insights into their career pathways.

- » Talks on apprenticeships and direction on options after year 11.

Learning from the week culminates in the 'trading game'. Students are tasked with spending a morning developing an original idea, concept or product. It is then pitched to over 50 guests who 'buy' the products with virtual money. The group with the most money wins. The trading game takes just 40 fun and frantic minutes.

In the 'trading game', students pitch their original idea, concept or product to over 50 guests who 'buy' the products with virtual money

Friends of EGA and other invited guests are those with whom the academy has built strong relationships. These professional contacts work closely with us throughout the year running programmes, facilitating careers workshops and giving students invaluable insights. Skanska, BT, Goldman Sachs, Salesforce, JP Morgan as well as local busi-

nesses and social enterprises are among those who join teachers, governors and others for what is one of the highlights of our school year.

The benefits of employability week for students

This week is a chance for everyone to shine and understand that good interpersonal skills and a professional approach can take them a long way. It is such a pleasure to witness how much our students grow in the course of the week. Students demonstrate curiosity and mature, professional engagement with their peers and the adults supporting them. One senior recruiter said: 'Students were well prepared, paying attention, asking good questions and showing genuine interest.'

Students often make contacts via the networking session and some find their own work experience placements for the summer as a result. Some have become EGA career champions and will pass on what they have learnt to other students. In end-of-programme evaluations, over 90% say they have gained confidence. One student, reflecting on the

week, said: 'It brings you out of your comfort zone and increases your confidence to talk to other people. Also it made me realise how hard it is to be an entrepreneur.'

Students find it comforting to know they can use the professional advice they have had to construct their CV and get ready for an interview when they start looking for part-time, Saturday or holiday jobs.

Over 90% of students also say that the programme gives them a better understanding of their future career options. Importantly, students take on board from the real-life stories they hear that a career is not always a smooth pathway and that in addition to great qualifications and skills it takes determination and grit to be successful in the workplace.



Year 11 students review their school careers

Year 11 students with Nerice Flatt, Tasmin Griffin and Joseph Hoad, Ormiston Denes Academy

On one of SSAT chief executive Sue Williamson's regular visits to member schools, she spoke to some students at Ormiston Denes Academy about their experience at the school, which became an academy in 2013, recovering from a former 11-16 school which had been in special measures.

Three of those students agreed to speak on the record for SSAT Journal: Nerice Flatt, Tamsin Griffin and Joseph Hoad. All were in year 11, had just completed their GCSEs, and would be moving from the 11-16 academy to Lowestoft Sixth Form College in the autumn.

Recent history

Joseph outlined the school's recent history, from his perspective: 'I've been here the full five years, since it was The Dene's High School. I've been through all the changes the school has gone through. Key changes were in headteacher. When I was in year 7 it was Mr Lincoln, then we had Mr Marshall, and Mr Driver has been head since September

2016. Mr Marshall started a new behavioural structure with stricter rules and more severe sanctions. We had a ban on mobile phones, including during breaks and lunch. Mr Driver has continued that, with better support, and also provided more support academically with our GCSEs.'

Nerice took up the story: 'when Mr Marshall came, student behaviour was really low, people didn't care about learning and didn't want to do any work in lessons. This caused bullying issues. The school was in special measures, which didn't help encourage students either. When the school became an academy we had better facilities and equipment, new computers and better music facilities, so we could put on shows and gigs. And now there are laptops we can use in lessons.'

'The teachers in the foundation classes have improved a lot,' she added. 'We gained from more supportive and experienced teachers. They encouraged all students to learn, instead of

some working and some not. They introduced clubs and interventions after school, to keep students involved outside school hours, focusing on hobbies and learning.'

Tamsin agreed: 'I noticed over the last two years with the school as an academy in the Ormiston Trust we had more highly qualified teachers, delivering more appropriate lessons than some we had in the past. That helped a lot of people, especially those in the higher sets; we were more challenged, when before we were just floating. They helped to push us that extra mile. We had more support, we felt more confident.'

Behaviour and student support

Behaviour at the school has improved a lot, the students agreed. 'I think this is because teachers are giving more support,' Nerice explained, 'so everyone now realises they care about how we're feeling in the academy. We have house bases where we can go if we have problems, and school counsellors they can arrange for



you to see. If you have family issues, the counselling sessions can help keep you positive, in and outside school.'

'They have helped a lot with issues people have had such as domestic and child abuse,' added Joseph. 'And teachers at school talk to the child and settle their nerves.'

Tamsin recalled: 'I was quite shy in year 6 in primary school. Then I was invited to come to a two-week summer school here and mixed with kids who were already here. It made me feel more comfortable. We had to do a presentation on a given country (mine was Italy), and present to parents and the rest of the students, who filled a hall. At first I really didn't want to get on that

stage, but teachers encouraged me and during the presentation they stood in my line of sight at the back of the hall so it was like I was only talking to them. That helped me so much, and over the years I became more confident at speaking publicly. Two years ago I led a group at another summer school, and our group won! This school has really helped my confidence.'

Confidence in presenting to a full hall was greatly helped by teachers who 'stood in my line of sight at the back of the hall so it was like I was only talking to them'

For Nerice, an important focus was the PE and dance sessions after school. 'You can learn routines in the dance studio, and they hold auditions for a school production each year. Rehearsals take place in school hours and after. This year's show was *All the World's a Stage*, with songs from different musicals. I did *Defying Gravity* and *Mamma Mia*. It was a lot of fun and you make loads of new friends when you spend so much time with people, in your year group and others.'

Raising achievement, motivating learning

The students approve the introduction since September 2016 of Ormiston Denes' Raising Achievement Centre, where students can go when they need help. 'It has qualified support



staff who can help you with anything you need to know,' said Joseph. 'Their support is excellent: if they don't know the answers (such as with the ECDL) they will go away and learn it for us, they become expert in a new subject in just a week!

'We also had a new head of year 11, Mr Senior. He made it so much better and easier for us, so we were able to achieve better grades. They introduced Saturday schools, where teachers gave up their free time so we could revise. This was 9am to 12.15, every Saturday from Christmas through to the beginning of GCSEs. It was optional, but more than 75% of students attended. We also had Easter school in the holidays, three or more times a week from 9am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm, covering different subjects. As a result, we definitely felt a lot more confident.

Saturday schools, from Christmas to the start of GCSEs, were optional, but more than 75% of students attended'

'When I first came I had never been a very well-behaved or focused student, and I found it difficult to take part in lessons,' Joseph added. 'It was different with teachers like Mr Buist, especially, who helped us to learn. Now most of the teachers love me and I'm a very well-behaved student (Nerice and Tamsin laughed) and top of the class in sciences. What made the difference? The teacher said, "focus on what you enjoy in the lesson". For me that was a new way of looking at it, instead of just thinking "this is boring". He spoke to my heart, changed my state of mind. He also made me see it was important, so I got on with it.'

What next for these students?

All three are moving on to Lowestoft Sixth Form College: Nerice to study psychology and performing arts, and Tamsin A-level law, psychology and Level 3 BTEC forensic science: 'If I enjoy law I'll hopefully do it at uni,' she added.

Joseph plans to study A-level chemistry, physics, mathematics 'and hopefully further maths. I want to go into teaching because the teachers here, especially in science, have managed to make it fun, and I want to be like them. Everyone here has inspired me to want to teach.'

'I want to go into teaching because the teachers here... have managed to make it fun, and I want to be like them'

What makes 60% of students want to become prefects?

*Dan Ellerby,
The St Lawrence Academy*

What makes 60% of students want to become prefects? A broad and rich recruitment/induction process that gives them valued skills and experience, explains Dan Ellerby, senior middle leader, the St Lawrence Academy

When our school became the St Lawrence Academy in 2009, it

did not just give us the opportunity to redefine ourselves as an organisation in terms of the name, uniform and building. It also allowed us to develop a new ethos and vision that would enable all students to flourish and meet their full potential.

As an academy sponsored by the Church of England we have a strong Christian ethos, and

our core values of generosity, respect, justice, truth and forgiveness truly underpin everything we do. It is also imperative that students have the opportunity to develop spiritually and personally as well as through academic achievements, and become better leaders who are able to make significant contributions both within the academy and the local community.





A chance for student leadership

In our predecessor school, student voice opportunities were limited and generally ineffective, and so the intention when we became an academy was to create a student leadership structure that empowered students and developed their sense of belonging within the school community. The vision was for student leadership to be fully embedded into all aspects of academy life. It would become a key driving force behind much of what we do, allowing students to learn and grow as leaders. It would create a culture in which students were passionate about taking on additional roles and responsibilities because they understood the benefits to themselves personally, and also the potential impact they were able to have on the academy.

In our first year, we expanded the school council to include one member from each of our 25 tutor groups. They met regularly to discuss various issues and ideas to help move the academy forward. For the first time we introduced a prefect body, including head prefects, deputy head prefects, and senior prefects from the year 11 cohort. After raising the profile of these leadership positions throughout the year, we started to evolve our structure for the following year.

We asked staff in all subject areas if they could introduce student leadership positions and task a member of their department to coordinate their respective group of student subject leaders. The response was very positive: staff were clearly excited about how they could use students' strengths to help move

their department forward. We took a flexible approach as to how this was set up. The number of leaders required in each subject, the year group from which leaders were recruited, and the types of responsibilities the student leaders would have were all at the discretion of each department. The staff really bought into the vision of what we were trying to create.

Wide scope for students

The students were just as excited about the leadership opportunities available to them, which created a buzz around student voice within the academy. A wide range of students from all year groups and a variety of contexts took the lead on things such as:

- » Supporting extracurricular opportunities
- » Helping the department on open evenings

- » Creating departmental resources
- » Promoting departmental trips
- » Supporting transition events.

Student subject leaders showed great enthusiasm and motivation about their subjects.

The student leadership structure has grown significantly as staff have recognised how well students have responded to the additional challenge of leadership, and so have sought to develop leadership opportunities in other contexts. Year after year, student empowerment flourished, leading to new opportunities and leadership roles: we now have 484 different leadership opportunities available, currently occupied by 285 different students.

We now have 484 different leadership opportunities, occupied by 285 different students

All students now have opportunities to lead on areas that are of genuine interest to them. For example, our house captains and house representatives not only lead on house assemblies, but create and deliver their own house competitions, and attend staff house meetings. The 'eco warriors' help us work towards achieving the nine areas of the Eco Schools Green Flag status, which involves planning a whole-school project to showcase at the Lincolnshire Show Schools Challenge.

Our collective worship leaders help shape daily reflections during tutor time and also lead on acts of worship including Harvest, Christmas and Easter. The literacy leaders help coordinate and deliver whole school literacy initiatives, while our 'positive contribution leaders' contribute to a variety of internal and external fundraising events, which have a positive impact on both the academy and the wider community. Nurture leaders take a prominent role in our nurture room and help and support some more vulnerable students. Peer mentors provide support to students to develop their emotional wellbeing, as well as planning and delivering awareness raising campaigns on topics which may lead to bullying, or situations where there is conflict.

There are many other leadership opportunities available, and plans to introduce various new leaders into different areas over the next academic year.

The recruitment process for all leadership positions is invaluable for the students' personal development. During our annual recruitment period in September, students experience a variety of application forms, interviews, presentations and other tasks in order to secure



the desired leadership roles. We believe this helps to develop the skills and qualities students will need to pursue their dreams and goals in the future including character and resilience. All these students are recognised and presented with their leadership badges in leadership celebration assemblies delivered by head prefects, who set the expectations for the following year.





Most students aspire to become prefects

The pinnacle of our student leadership structure is becoming a prefect during year 11. The process has developed each year and is now extremely challenging, involving four different stages initially, and a further four stages to become a part of the senior prefect team, who lead on different strands linked to the academy development plan.

Each year, at least 90 of our 150 year 10 students enter stage one of the selection process. This is whittled down to around 30 students by the end, after a couple of months of various challenges including:

- » group tasks
- » presentations
- » application forms
- » interviews

- » training workshops
- » hustings
- » staff and student votes.

This culminates in a reflective, and spiritual, prefect ceremony in which students are presented with their prefect ties and badges in front of parents, guardians and all academy staff. It is clear that all students, whether successful or not, value the process in terms of the skills and qualities it allows them to develop. Students regularly cite within their interviews about having aspirations of being a prefect ever since the transition days they experienced as year 6 students, within which prefects take a leading role. So the ethos and culture of leadership is embedded right from outset, which is why so many students embrace the numerous leadership oppor-

tunities available to them during their five years with us.

The journey of redefining and developing student leadership is ever changing. We believe we have made great strides in empowering our students and using leadership as a vehicle to allow them to become responsible, reliable and well-rounded young people. The impact of this student leadership structure has without doubt strengthened positive relationships between staff and students. It has helped us foster a culture of collaboration and innovation, providing students with a strong sense of belonging and longlasting memories on which they are able to reflect.



A successful approach to student leadership

*Charlotte Sparrow,
Windsor High School and Sixth Form*

Charlotte Sparrow, assistant headteacher at Windsor High School, shows how students can lead in curricular, pastoral and academic areas of school life, with benefits to the whole community

Windsor High School and Sixth Form, a state comprehensive in Halesowen, West Midlands, is the founding school of the Windsor Academy Trust. A key facet of the trust's work is enrichment opportunities for students, giving them 'cultural capital' by enhancing their experiences through opportunities that help to develop skills beyond the curriculum.

Among the aspects of school life that can help to deliver cultural capital:

- » The curriculum: through outside speakers/use of relevant thought-provoking material, as well as the breadth and depth of the curriculum itself.
- » The pastoral programme: tutor time/assemblies/guest speakers/collapsed curriculum days.
- » Extra-curricular programme.
- » Educational visits and fixtures away from the immediate school site.
- » Student leadership programmes.

This article explores the types of leadership roles students can undertake and how these affect not only the individual students but the school as a whole. This happens through students working collaboratively with parents, younger students and

staff to enhance and improve the learning experience for all.

Students can lead in three main areas of school life: extracurricular, pastoral and academic. The box shows examples of some of the roles.

Extracurricular (school/environment)

School senators, Eco-leaders, Design agency, Paired readers, Librarians, Music leaders, Art leaders, Graphics leaders, Dance leaders, Sports leaders, Digital leaders, IT technicians, Spanish leaders, French leaders, Maths leaders

Pastoral (house/tutors)

Games makers (years 7-11)
House senators (years 7-11)
Pastoral seniors (year 10)
Peer mentors (year 11)
Prefects (year 11)
Senior prefect (year 11)
Head boy and head girl (year 11)
Student union (years 12-13)
Student ambassadors (years 12/13)
Paired readers (years 12/13)

Academic (curriculum)

Leaders of learning
Subject mentors



The aim of the leadership programme is to offer a wide variety of roles whereby students are developing and using skills that will be of use to them not only in school but beyond.

Hart (1995) stated we should 'consider the power that student leaders should be able to exercise, on behalf of the school, in order to make their experiences meaningful rather than tokenistic and manipulative'. So what impact does taking a role have? What is the scope of the roles that students undertake and how have their roles affected themselves and the school?

For examples, two roles: the school senate, which is well established, and the recently developed leaders of learning.

The school senate

Four years ago we decided to create a 'stage not age' group of leaders, who would work with a member of staff on embedding our student learning with the 10 principles that underpin excellent teaching and learning.

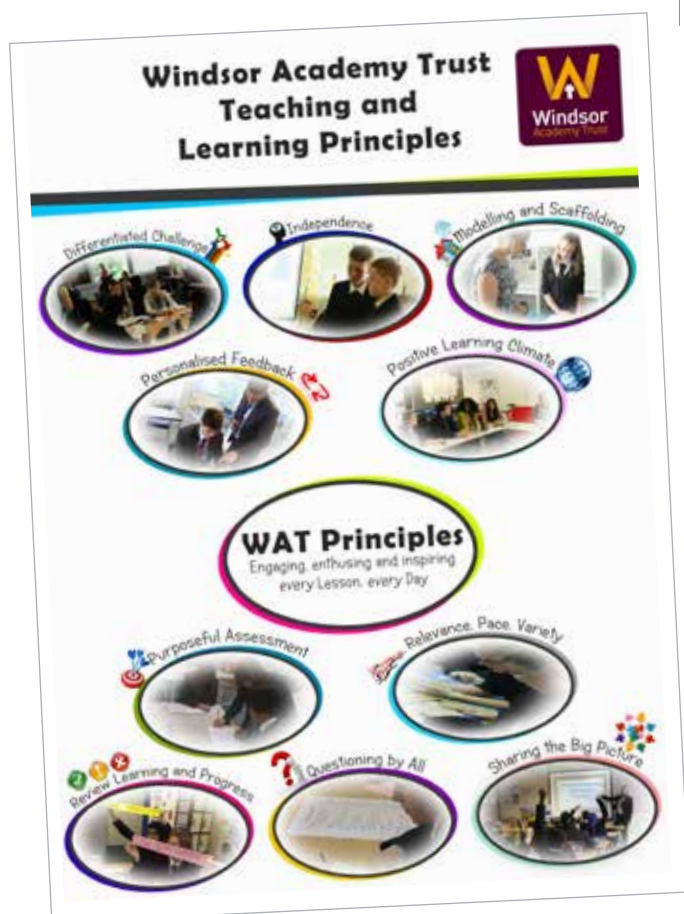
The school senators' role has grown since then, and in 2016/17 I changed the way in which they worked as a group. As a PE teacher I have seen how, with the right guidance and training, students can become effective leaders. We had a wide range of experience and talent in the senate, so the students needed to be challenged at a variety of levels.

Once the senators had decided on the key projects they wanted to work on, they elected a team leader who wrote a project development plan. So the onus was on the students. I met the team leaders to monitor their work, but they led their teams: from organising meetings, delegating tasks, and collating research data, to liaising and meeting with other staff, students had ownership of their projects.

They planned, researched and led on several large projects: year 11 and 13 parents' revision evening; year 9 options project; sixth form 'resources for students by students' project; accelerated reader project; open evening and student senate conference presentations; and the primary leadership conference, which they planned and led.

The senate also continued work on a major project that had begun the previous year. Having introduced the concept of the 'learning pit' to students, the senate wanted to find out how much it was being used in lessons. They conducted research with staff and students, which suggested to them that they needed to do more to ensure the concept was fully understood and being used effectively. Students interviewed staff who had identified themselves in their feedback as using the concept of the learning pit effectively. They then presented to a whole-staff meeting, with the identified staff giving examples, how the pit concept could be used effectively in lessons.

Having asked the staff how they felt, the students could further embed the concept of the learning pit. They organised themselves into small teams and approached faculty directors, to discuss what would make an effective subject-specific learning pit. These are designed to signpost students towards sources of help to overcome learning challenges other than merely asking the teacher, thus promoting the concepts of resilience and independence.



Impact

We found the school senate had wide-ranging impact last year on all these groups: parents, staff and primary students, as well as our own students.

The students were focusing on teaching and learning and how this could be improved from both a student's and a teacher's point of view.

Students presented to a variety of audiences including Martin Renton, co-founder of the Learning Pit, and national schools commissioner Sir David Carter, who said he had 'nothing but praise' for the learning culture he saw.

'Being a school senator has made me more confident in all situations and has allowed me to improve my communication skills' *Year 9 student*

Leaders of learning

While the school had a number of extracurricular, pastoral and whole school leadership roles, I felt there was a gap in the leadership roles in the classroom, and so we launched a pilot for leaders of learning. Each faculty nominated a number of students who they felt could be effective in this role. After training sessions with these students, identified staff worked with them over a period of 6-8 weeks.

Students led a variety of activities – starters, lesson tasks, plenaries, setting homework tasks, projects, and presentations. And in mathematics, they planned and led a whole lesson on circle theorem.

Impact

- » 84% of students in the pilot agreed or strongly agreed that being a leader of learning had improved their confidence.
- » 74% agreed or strongly agreed that they had enjoyed leading in lessons, that their understanding had improved and they had become more organised as a result of being a leader of learning.
- » 84% agreed or strongly agreed that other students had responded positively to being led in lessons.

In the maths project, 16 out of 30 pupils achieved 85% or above in tests of the material that had been covered by the leaders of learning. Some comments from the students:

'I think having leaders of learning is really good, we understand it better because other students can reword work in a way we can understand.'

Year 10 student

'If I explain it to others, I can understand it better myself.'

Year 9 maths leader of learning

'I have to be organised and make sure I really get the topic before I teach it to others.'

Year 10 science leader of learning



Conclusions

At Windsor we want our students to develop skills in leadership, and for it to be more than wearing a badge.

- » Students can, given the right guidance and support, be excellent leaders in a variety of situations. They can work alongside staff, other students and parents to enhance the learning experiences of all students across the school.
- » For the individuals there are a myriad of benefits, from improving confidence and self-esteem to meeting new friends, presenting in front of different audiences and developing communication and organisation skills.
- » For the school there are no better advocates than your own students.
- » And for their future, the skills that they learn through leading others will be invaluable.

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Visiting and working with schools across the globe has many benefits – not least combating intolerance

*Martin MacDonald,
Longdean School*

Martin Macdonald, leading practitioner, geography, describes Longdean School's wide-ranging international activities, and their benefits

International schools work is a strong part of the ethos of Longdean School. We have spent years steadily building international links, along with succession planning and developing curriculum activities. These culminated in the school's designation as a GLP (Global Learning Programme) expert centre in 2016. This work has aided whole-school improvement, developing student engagement and forging links in the local community as well as with international schools. Student leadership and involvement in the GLP and international schools activities has led to improved student engagement across the curriculum and improved results, while promoting tolerance, fairness and respect.

The school has a truly comprehensive intake. It has 20 different ethnicities (16% of the



1200 students are of Pakistani heritage), the students speak 27 different languages at home and 28% qualify for pupil premium. This creates a natural affinity with trying to understand the world; indeed, many classes reveal insight in their lessons through the diverse nature of the students and staff of the school. A less positive factor is that parts of the school catchment area are in the top 20% of poorest postcodes in the country. This is a place where students need school to give them strong global learning opportunities and messages, and to reinforce those messages in all that we do.

Supporting schools' wider aims

The challenges that Longdean faces are ones that many colleagues will recognise in this time of intolerance around the world. The international work and the structures and support put in place by the GLP support the wider aims to which most schools aspire. Our role as an expert centre (although we have always preferred the idea of being a hub rather than 'the experts') has included building networks of primary and secondary schools and external business and charitable links. We share best practice and CPD opportu-



nities with all staff at Longdean and many other schools across our region and further afield.

Experience convinced us of the valuable impact of global learning for any school, whatever their catchment areas, income levels and aspirations

How the legacy of this project will carry forward into future global learning and international schools work is an essential question that we are considering now. We were introduced to the work of a previous expert centre, Sir John Lawes School, in neighbouring Harpenden. We were part of their network, and their experience convinced us of the valuable impact of global learning for any school, whatever their catchment areas, income levels and aspirations.

We were hugely impressed with the quality of support from the GLP, which built on the work that we were already doing as a school. The organisations leading this government-funded programme (Pearson, Geographical Association, UCL Institute of Education, Oxfam UK, Royal Geographical Society [with IBG], Think Global and SSAT) are all highly regarded and the structure of the offer they have put together is incomparable (and free). The website alone is a wealth of news, resources, links and tools. Participants can also use the pupil assessment tool to gain insight into pupils' knowledge and understanding, while contributing to national research as part of the programme.

Becoming part of a network introduces you to a number of like-minded local secondary and primary schools and a very clearly structured and tailored twilight Inset programme that schools can get involved

in, led by their expert centre. Each school also has access to £500-worth of e-credits which can be used to book CPD from third party providers, on topics such as philosophy for children and critical thinking, curriculum development, human rights education, bringing global themes across the curriculum, and a global approach to British values.

Overcoming poor attendance

Longdean's experience as an expert centre further developed our own international work and we gained a great deal from it. The initial training was very well structured and the resources and local and regional experts supporting our delivery of the CPD were exemplary. Our major issue was getting people to attend the sessions, despite the primary and secondary schools that signed up. However, we shared all resources used, provided virtual sessions and collaborated with a number of other expert cen-



tres to run a county-wide global learning conference attended by a wide range of schools and other organisations.

The experience has been invaluable. We have built a wide range of international learning opportunities into our long term efforts to link with schools around the world.

Our most sustainable partnership is with Bedomase Methodist Junior High School in the

Ashanti Region of Ghana, a link forged through the Global Gateway nearly 10 years ago. This was followed by many British Council applications and grants to support teachers and students from both countries in visiting each other, and jointly planning and running activities in both schools and communities.

These visits have inspired the work that we now do in many lessons across the school, and in our year 6 transition project

over the summer holidays before starting year 7. The activities add richness and context to Longdean students' learning. Our GLP experience has also redoubled our belief in a 'social justice' rather than 'charitable' mentality when working with Ghana, and with schools in China, Nepal, Hong Kong and many other countries over the last couple of years. We have recently been reaccredited with the International School Award (2017-20), and our students now expect to have opportunities to work with students around the world.

GLP experience has also redoubled our belief in a 'social-justice' rather than a 'charitable' mentality when working with Ghana, China, Nepal, Hong Kong and many other countries

We have worked with a number of European partners on E-Twinning and Erasmus+ projects (some very successfully, others less so, but always providing an interesting experience). Classes work with e-pals and take part in field trips across the world. As a World Challenge centre, we have sent/are sending hundreds of students to places such as the Himalayas, Swaziland, Costa Rica, Zambia, Botswana and Sri Lanka. On one occasion, a Maa-sai warrior dance troupe, who had heard about this work, took the initiative to arrange to come and visit us. There are so many

potential global learning opportunities out there.

Assessing the impact

A student voice interview of students from a wide range of backgrounds, abilities and year groups took place last year as part of a leadership exchange programme. This highlighted a very strong student understanding of the role of international schools' work. They highly valued the opportunities available as a result of our link with Ghana and World Challenge expeditions.

Visitors are always impressed by the student views of global opportunities, and one student gained sponsorship from a local company for his Sri Lanka World Challenge expedition, following his discussions as a guide at our open evening in October.

The GLP Pupil Assessment Tool has been used to assess all year 7 students this term, and year 9 and year 7 again at the end of the year, to test genuine progress. The students love working with peers from other countries, and e-twinning also enthuses them, with direct contact with students of a similar age across Europe. Link visits from Ghana or Hong Kong in the last couple of years have been wonderful to see: students take great responsibility in guiding their partners and going on visits/meals with our guests.

Moving on to international study and work

Many of our students have gone on to study and work in the international/global sector, and many have also travelled to far-flung places in the last few years. Typically, they credit their Longdean experiences as their inspiration.

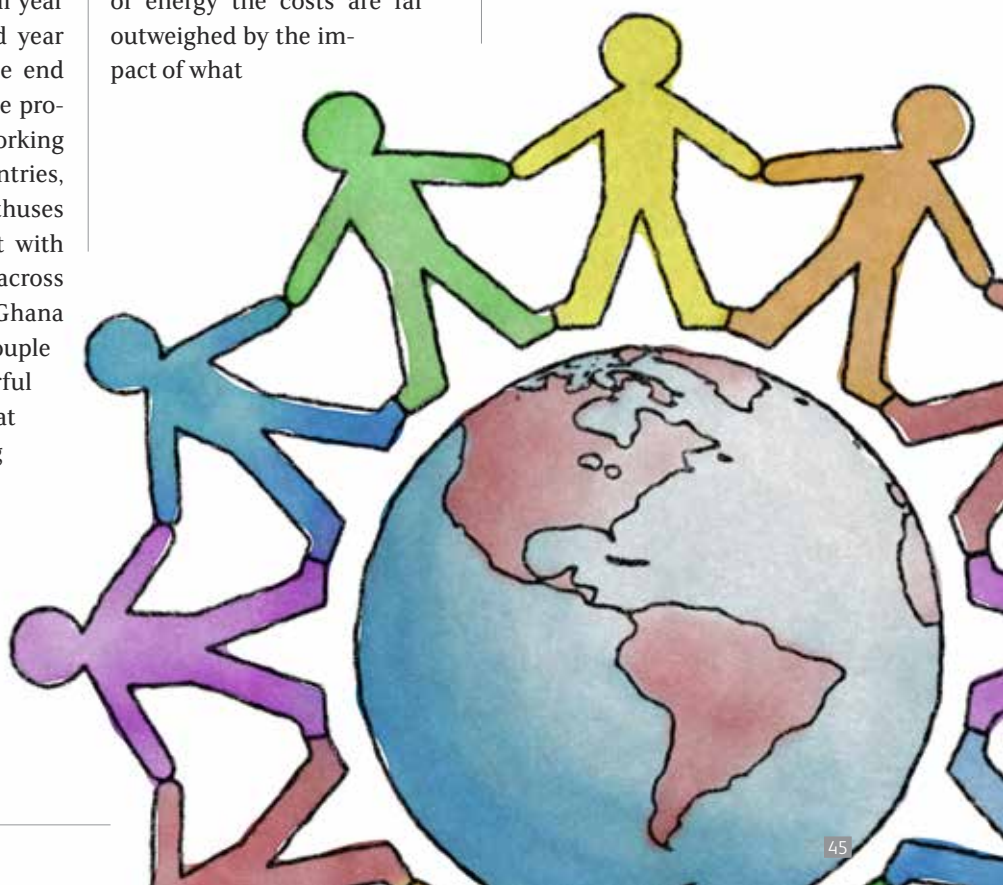
We also have seen shy/introverted students transformed, developing the confidence to meet partner students, MPs and dignitaries, to speak in public and to run concerts. Former colleagues teaching in other parts of the country, and the world, still stay in contact through our school links and global work. Some of our future links will undoubtedly come out of the legacy of these connections.

Our journey shows that by applying a little inspiration, time, like-minded colleagues and lots of energy the costs are far outweighed by the impact of what

these activities can produce. Our student and staff international school groups drive the work that we do and they are all ambassadors for the benefits of global learning and activities.

The GLP legacy has given us new networks to use and learn from, new structures and resources to refresh our own work – and the impetus to push colleagues to be creative and expansive in their thinking and planning.

Photography:
Caroline Hodgson



Physical activity can improve students' wellbeing – and performance

*Chris Wright,
Youth Sports Trust (YST)*

Chris Wright, head of health and wellbeing at the Youth Sport Trust, shows some ways schools can use PE and sport to counter the challenges to mental wellbeing

Students' mental wellbeing in schools is no longer a hushed conversation about pupil X in the staffroom. This is partly because the significant rise in young people exhibiting poor mental wellbeing means that it is now too often a conversation about pupils A-Z and even year groups 9, 10 and 11.

However, the good thing is that the conversation is no longer a hushed one; school leaders, staff and pupils now talk much more openly about the mental wellbeing challenges facing them. This is mirrored by the education and national press, which regularly publish articles about pupils struggling with issues such as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. In recent weeks TES, to take one example, has run stories on: an academy chain calling for every teacher to be trained in 'mental health first aid', the mental health implications of online activity, provision of support in schools, and of course the mental health challenges faced by teachers themselves.

It is a positive development that more and more people are taking the issues seriously. Educators now know that unless students (and teachers) are in the right mental place to learn/teach we can throw all the extra tuition and interventions we like at young people but results won't improve. Youth Sport Trust's own research, carried out as part of our Girls Active



programme, found that more than one in three girls aged 14-16 are unhappy with the way their bodies look. A similar proportion say lack of confidence stops them taking part in PE and other physical activity at school.

It also seems that politicians across the spectrum are indicating positive support for schools in dealing with the issues. The party manifestos back in the summer all gave prominence to mental health and wellbeing. Political lobbyists and thinktanks have followed suit, and are holding further events about building young people's character, resilience and life skills.

With the greater dialogue on mental wellbeing, hard pressed teachers will be asking themselves if they are trained or have the resources to deal with some of the more complex cases around mental health. And (with funding and structural changes) who to turn to for expertise on children and adolescent mental health support.



However, there are signs of increased options for CPD and other support. For example, the Carnegie Centre for Excellence for Mental Health in Schools has launched a specific MA in leading mental wellbeing in schools. And, at time of writing, we are anticipating a government green paper on mental health in schools; we hope it will lead among other things to an increase in the existing £200k government commitment to mental health first aid training for teachers.

Focus on prevention

The risk though is that policymakers and schools concentrate only on the causes of poor mental wellbeing or on specific approaches to more pronounced cases of mental ill health. At the Youth Sport Trust we would like to see a much more holistic approach, which looks at a wide range of pre-

ventive measures, including PE, sport and other physical activity.

The Stanground Academy in Peterborough was one of the first schools to implement the Youth Sport Trust's My Personal Best programme. It uses secondary curriculum PE to teach young people vital character traits such as creativity, aspiration, resilience and empathy. Through professional training and support, all members of a PE teaching team reflect upon, challenge and refresh their own practice. Each teacher then takes an approach based on action research to ensure PE remains relevant to young people today.

'Simply by teaching our normal activities but highlighting the students' success in overcoming difficulty and celebrating that, their perception of their

own resilience rose,' explains Pete Bibb, the academy's head of PE. 'Even better, that perception became fact, a trait they could apply to maths or English. So we planned My Personal Best into the new revamped life skills curriculum, using PE activities as authentic situations for learning and exhibiting life skills.'

PE activities can provide authentic situations for learning and exhibiting life skills

As well as thinking about how to use curriculum PE to grow life skills such as resilience and good communication, YST have worked with schools to look at how techniques used by professional athletes can support students at exam time.

Techniques used by professional athletes can support students at exam time

It is well documented that levels of stress and anxiety among students can peak at these times. In 2016 we worked with Moulton School and Science College and a number of other Northamptonshire schools, extending a pilot of the Get Exam Fit programme to reduce pupils' stress and anxiety and help improve their academic attainment. Across the secondary schools we worked with the programme found:

- » An overall reduction in number of referrals for the vast majority of the pupils involved in the programme. Referrals were those to in school wellbeing services rather than the NHS's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- » Improvements in academic attainment (students involved in the programme performed at the same level or better than expected in their GCSE exams).
- » Reductions in exam-related stress and anxiety for some students.
- » Increased understanding and normalisation of exam-related stress and anxiety affecting young people.
- » School champions, such as heads of PE or heads of wellbeing, viewing their

involvement in the programme as an effective form of professional development.

- » The programme playing a protective role in developing techniques/strategies to help students feel less stressed/anxious generally, and less alone in dealing with the issues.

Broader developments

The science linking physical activity and mental wellbeing is encouraging. Harvard research has found that regular exercise changes the brain to improve memory and thinking skills [bit.ly/2z]SrVO]. Separate research has also found that people who are physically inactive are more prone to suffering from anxiety and depression.

Over the Autumn 2017 half-term the government published their response to the first joint report of the Education and Health Committees about wellbeing in schools and colleges [bit.ly/2yCMTLn].

Too often we can focus on what to do when mental health challenges become increasingly serious. Maybe we need to challenge ourselves to keep looking at what we can do to prevent these challenges from arising. We may not be able to turn back the clock on social media (which evidence suggests is one of the major sources of mental ill-health among young people) but we can look at how we give them the tools in life to manage their physical and emotional wellbeing. And your school's PE department can hopefully be at the heart of that.

The Youth Sport Trust is an independent national charity working with thousands of primary and secondary schools to create a brighter future for young people. We passionately believe that sport and physical activity have a huge role to play in nurturing wellbeing. We believe there is huge potential for us to work with SSAT, employing its leadership expertise to support teachers and students and tackle the mental health challenges afflicting today's generation of young people.

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