



SSAT Journal 14

Spring 2019

ssat the schools, students
and teachers network

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Welcome

*Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT*



The DfE needs to listen to teachers

I have now reached the point in my career when I no longer feel the need to be diplomatic about the Department for Education: it is not fit for purpose.

For all the rhetoric about being school-led, the Department and its ministers feel they know best. They don't – they need to step away from interfering with practice and create the environment in which teachers and young people thrive. They need to demonstrate that they appreciate the professionalism and experience of teachers. This will help to recruit and retain teachers.

Reading the articles in this term's journal endorses my view that we have very talented teachers, who are keen to bring together research and practice. There is so much in these articles to support great teaching. SSAT is a passionate advocate of the profession leading the way in education, and this is why we support the Chartered College of Teaching.

Our own professional body

We have waited far too long for our own professional body to champion great teaching and raise the status of the profession. I was delighted when Alison Peacock was appointed chief executive and Stephen Munday elected president. Both are former headteachers with a passion for excellent education for all young people and a commitment to developing a highly skilled and knowledgeable profession. We hope that all teachers will seize this once in a lifetime opportunity and join the College.

I am pleased to say that SSAT and the College are working together with the stated ambition of raising the status of the profession. I look forward to sharing more details with you over the coming months.

Enjoy the journal, and if you would like to contribute please email your relationship manager on rmteam@ssatuk.co.uk.

**Sue Williamson,
SSAT**

SSAT IS FIGHTING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

As we launch our Deep Social Justice campaign, we want to work directly with schools to shape the agenda.

We would like to hear your views in order to understand the barriers you face in achieving social justice, what you are already doing to promote social justice, and help position social justice as a driving force for English education.

Visit ssatuk.co.uk/dsj to share your views.



The major factors in reducing teacher workload

*Panel discussion at the
SSAT National Conference 2018*

This SSAT National Conference panel discussion on 5 December 2018 featured four people with significant and varied experience of dealing with teacher workload: Ani Magill, CEO of Xavier multi-academy trust; Luke Tryl, Ofsted's director of corporate strategy; Jack Worth, lead economist at NFER; and David Lowbridge-Ellis, deputy headteacher at Barr Beacon School.

The discussion chair, Cath Murray of Schools Week, introduced the discussion by asking the audience of teachers and school leaders who they thought was the worst offender in creating workload. Of the six options (DfE, Ofsted, governors, headteachers, SLT, or teachers themselves), Ofsted came out the 'winner', as Luke Tryl ruefully noted.

Luke Tryl: "I get the dubious distinction of representing the government here. As many of you will know, we at Ofsted are in the process of developing our new inspection framework. I was particularly keen to take part in this panel so that we could get ideas for the sort of stuff that we could put in the framework to help to get the workload down.

"There are four things we can do. One is reducing the workload generated by inspection; specifically, all of the stuff beforehand which goes into the prep for inspection. Ofsted's changing of the outcomes judgement so that it is part of quality of education judgement rather than a distinct judgement will help to make a difference.

"We say time and time again, don't do mocktests, don't do triple marking. And yet, when we did a poll of teachers this year, many teachers still don't realise that: only 36% of teachers had seen anything from our myth-busting campaign. This is a real challenge: beyond putting a clone of Sean Harford in every classroom, I'm not sure what else we can do in terms of myth-busting.

A poll found only 36% of teachers had seen Ofsted's myth-busting campaign.

"This is a real challenge: beyond putting a clone of Sean Harford in every classroom, I'm not sure what else we can do."

Luke Tryl, Ofsted

"The third thing is: to what extent do we make judging how schools are tackling workload part of the inspection framework? There's a whole range of options here, but I have some trepidation about it because we know sometimes when we put something into the framework it creates a whole raft of unintended consequences.

"And then the fourth thing is highlighting good practice. We've started a big research project on teacher workload and wellbeing, looking at a random sample of 1,000 schools: where workload is high, where it's not, and what the differences between the schools are.



“So, I’m really interested to hear what you come up with – as long as it’s not getting rid of director of strategy at Ofsted!”

Jack Worth of NFER: “In the secondary sector, in particular, recruitment isn’t keeping up with the additional numbers of teachers we need, and this places the emphasis back on teacher retention and how we retain teachers. And in every survey of teachers in the last 15-20 years, workload comes out as the top concern.

“One thing I’d emphasise from the teacher polling we’ve done recently is about line management. So, senior leaders could see how line management could be more effective in identifying and addressing workload issues.”

David Lowbridge-Ellis felt that teachers themselves can be partly responsible for some of their workload issues: “We have to be really protective of our staff with what they’re putting their time into.” Barr Beacon had done much to reduce the workload associated with marking: “manageable, meaningful, and motivating are really effective principles to adopt for any marking policy.”

Ani Magill agreed school leaders have some responsibility here: “The two culprits in my view are the DfE and, I’m sorry to say, us – leaders, here in this room.

“To start with the DfE: this week we had a typical example, where you get what they call an ‘exciting funding opportunity’: you can bid for money to

support or build a partnership for special needs. But you have to write an expression of interest, which is 4,000 words. And then if you’re fortunate enough to get one of the bids you’ll need to write an action plan, a case study, some KPIs and a list of other things. If you do all of that, then, across the partnership, you’ll have £5000 to spend. And then, of course, there’s the evaluation afterwards that you’ll fill in; that will take you more hours.

“Why can’t we trust teachers to do a good job? As leaders, yes, we’ve got to hold people to account, but I would like to see us stopping doing 90% of the things that we do.”

Ani Magill

“When it comes to school leaders, my example is a young teacher who works in a primary school. She was on five days, but she went to four days, and then three days, so she could have a weekend. There are a variety of reasons, but one of them is that the head insists that everything is marked every evening and this young teacher has got it down to two hours a night. And all her planning has to be differentiated in four ways.

“Why are we doing this to our teachers? Why can’t we trust them to do a good job? As leaders, I think we’ve got to strip everything back. Yes, we’ve got to hold people to account, but I would like to see us stopping doing 90% of the things that we do.”



Luke Tryl suggested that sometimes governors are those most likely to overreact to an official judgement. “Our message is, don’t just look at the OE judgement, look at it all, and particularly leadership and management. One of the things which is really interesting is that if you’re an RI school overall but in a more disadvantaged area, you’re much more likely to have a good judgement for leadership and management.”

Funding shortfall – or needless waste?

“You mentioned funding. I do believe that there is huge waste in our schools. If we look at the research on, for example, learning support assistants, I go to schools all the time with children with learning support assistants Velcro’d to them: everybody loses out. And I go to schools that are filthy dirty but they’re paying £30,000 a year for the caretaker.”

Ani Magill felt waste is not the major issue: “there just isn’t enough money. But do we, as leaders, know exactly what it is that is causing each individual member of staff stress and what we could do to alleviate that stress? Each time you have a staff meeting, put post-its on each seat, so teachers can write down one thing that would make their life

easier, one way the leadership team could improve, and one thing that we could do that would cause you less stress. Then, the leaders in the school should invest the time in doing whatever they can to help individual staff, even in small ways.

In a poll repeated after the debate, delegates judged that Ofsted was no longer the only major contributor to workload: DfE should share the blame

“The first time that I did it, people wrote down things like: I don’t have a lockable drawer, I don’t have a key to my room, I don’t have any heating in my room, I have to fill in a form if I want to go to the dentist. They gave me a whole raft of areas where we could improve.”

To conclude the debate, chair Cath Murray had delegates repeat the poll judging the worst offenders in workload. Interestingly, DfE now challenged Ofsted for that dubious distinction. (“They were taking pity,” Luke Tryl suggested.)





Some reflections on the draft Ofsted framework

Tom Middlehurst,
SSAT

There is widespread agreement that the consultation process around Ofsted's new draft framework for September 2019 has been well handled. For one thing, it has taken two years to appear since Amanda Spielman took up post as her majesty's chief inspector.

During that time Ofsted has undertaken three phases of a review into curriculum planning and implementation in schools – and shared its findings at each stage. How this would then be reflected in the proposed new framework was therefore of little surprise to anyone, and was a refreshing change from how things used to happen under the previous HMCI.

Mixed reactions

Reaction to the draft framework has been varied. According to TES, academy heads at Schools North East gave 100% backing to the new direction¹, while expressing doubts about how it might be delivered. Stephen Tierney² on the other hand called it “all a bit

of a Brexit”, saying that major flaws in the current framework had not been addressed. IoE's Frank Coffield³ meanwhile railed at what he called “Ofsted's most objectionable and most damaging practice – the four-point grading scale”, calling it “an example of unintelligent accountability”.

If commentators are disappointed that there has not been a radical shift in school accountability practice, they will probably not be surprised. It has been a case of constant evolution rather than revolution in successive Ofsted frameworks since the process began in 1992. Back in July 2014, SSAT's *Redesigning Schooling* pamphlet on professional accountability⁴ challenged both school leaders and Ofsted to rethink their approach in the light of the increasing autonomy and self-improving nature of successful teachers and schools.

The new draft states that “the primary purpose of inspection under this framework is to bring about improvement in education

provision”. It also seeks to provide information to parents and others about the quality of education in a school or other setting, while giving assurances to government that “minimum standards” are being met. Whatever the metrics used, the key problem for any inspection service will be to ensure that the judgements it reaches will be sound, consistent and founded on a strong evidence base.

So how will the proposed changes for September help inspectors to meet that challenge?

Retaining the four overall grades from outstanding to inadequate was predictable. There was considerable speculation, however, about whether the exemption from inspection for outstanding schools should remain. There are schools on the Ofsted list that were last inspected and rated outstanding back in 2006. How does that inform parents and the government about the current quality of education for pupils in those schools? We know that the decision on exemption was the



DfE's and based primarily on the allocation of resources to Ofsted rather than on anything else, but it is still a missed opportunity.

A more rounded assessment

The new quality of education judgement, as its name suggests, should allow a more rounded assessment to be made and is to be welcomed. It should allow appropriate weighting to be given to both provision in school and pupil outcomes. However, the findings of phase 3 of the curriculum review found that some schools with high progress or attainment scores had a weak curriculum offer; and vice-versa. Ofsted will need to ensure that all its inspectors have a thorough understanding of what performance data can and can't say about a school. And they, and we, will need to be very assured of the reliability of its curriculum judgement if any trade-off between the two is going to have credibility across schools from a wide variety of contexts.

Having the lead inspector in school on the afternoon before the inspection starts could be a good opportunity for school leaders to contribute to the planning of inspection activity, in a similar way to what happens now at the beginning of a short section 8 inspection. It is certainly preferable to the disembodied conversation over the phone that currently takes place. As with other areas, however, much will depend on how the lead inspector chooses to use this time.

For several years now, Ofsted has been at pains to distance itself from preferred styles of

teaching. Running alongside the curriculum review was a study of research into the four areas of the draft framework, which was published at the same time⁵. The section on effective teaching highlights the need for active presentation and structuring of material by teachers, clarity of communication and effective questioning. There is a more measured approach to group work, suggesting that it should be "carefully sequenced alongside other lessons and activities to ensure that pupils have sufficient prior knowledge". In-class differentiation is reported as having little impact whereas "adapting teaching in a responsive way" does. As for learning styles: "...it should be clearly stated that there is no evidence that pupils have distinct and identifiable learning styles.... Trying to design tasks with this misconception in mind will increase teachers' workload but is very unlikely to improve learning."

It is to be hoped that these findings will be applied in a suitably professional and considered manner and not lead to the re-emergence of the "How to teach the perfect Ofsted lesson" industry.

Judgements based on first-hand evidence

The judgement on pupil outcomes (or "curriculum impact" as it will now be known) will be informed by historical data (including destinations data in secondary schools) but will be largely based on the first-hand evidence inspectors gather on inspection, mainly from lesson observations, discussions

with pupils and work scrutinies.

We know that inspectors will not look at a school's internal assessment data, presumably because they will not have the time either to unravel the byzantine systems that are now in use or to corroborate the validity of teacher judgements.

The problem is that none of those three activities is an exact science.

- A lesson observation can only be a snapshot.
- Discussions with pupils can present one-sided information.
- Work scrutiny is often held up by Ofsted as a reliable means of evaluating learning over time but has some serious drawbacks. Unless a huge amount of work is examined there is the problem of only seeing a sample, without its context. Unless the reviewer is a subject expert (which usually is not the case during an inspection), he or she will not have the subject knowledge or experience to make an informed judgement.

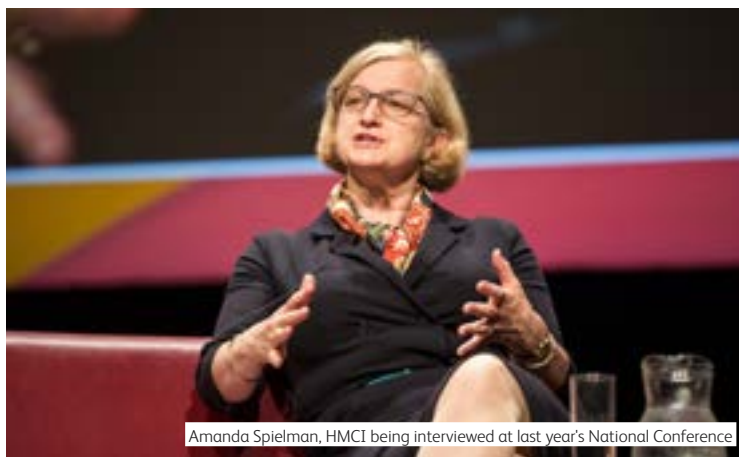
And it is all too easy during any of those three activities to hit upon one example of what might feel like an interesting line of enquiry and then to go to any length to find further examples elsewhere to back it up. Then, by extrapolation, a minor, even innocuous, issue can become a major one.

As with teaching styles, Ofsted has generally remained non-committal over curriculum offer. However in the new framework

we read that “At the heart of an effective key stage 4 curriculum is a strong academic core: the EBacc.” As Stephen Tierney has pointed out, there might not be much disagreement over the first half of that sentence but there could well be over the second half. Whether the change of heart is down to findings from the curriculum review or to a change in Ofsted’s long-cherished independence from the DfE, it will put the onus on school leaders to explain why they offer what they do. And perhaps that’s no bad thing, either – having the opportunity to explain their reasoning.

Perhaps we might see more examples of distributed and peer review taking place and a more proportionate approach to self-evaluation and development planning than often happens at the moment

A notable change in the leadership and management section of the draft framework is the absence of any reference to what was previously “rigorous and accurate self-evaluation”. From the days of the infamous online Ofsted self-evaluation form, the school SEF has always been synonymous with preparing for inspection, despite the reassurances from Ofsted more recently that this could be in whatever form school leaders choose to work with. The only



Amanda Spielman, HMCI being interviewed at last year’s National Conference

mention of self-evaluation comes early on when the lead inspector will ask before the inspection starts about any self-evaluation the school has undertaken. Quite how a school might recover subsequently if the answer to that initial question was “we haven’t done any” remains to be seen. It seems unlikely that school leaders and governors will throw out the baby with the bathwater but perhaps we might see more examples of distributed and peer review taking place and a more proportionate approach to self-evaluation and development planning than often happens at the moment.

Gaming and off-rolling

There has been considerable attention paid in the media to the proposals to investigate and potentially to downgrade schools that are “gaming” the accountability system and off-rolling pupils to gain a similar advantage. In secondary schools, lead inspectors will be backed up by a team of data analysts who will look beyond the published headline data to identify any potential irregularities for further investigation. The wider school system – even those who

might have played the ECDL game in the past – will largely welcome this move. However, as discussed at the beginning of this article, around 21% of schools judged to be outstanding will not be inspected at all; the 64% of good schools will only receive a light touch (albeit over two days from September) section 8 inspection every three years or so. That might not appear to the remaining 15% of schools to be a very level playing field when looking at the chances of getting caught.

The draft seems to have largely been endorsed already by the DfE but it is still important that as wide a range of stakeholders as possible contribute to the consultation. It runs until April and can be found at <http://bit.ly/2VnZyfW>

References

¹ <http://bit.ly/2GT5nyX>

² <https://leadinglearner.me/tag/ofsted-new-inspection-framework/>

³ <http://bit.ly/2H8MBCT>

⁴ <https://www.ssatuk.co.uk/redesigning-schooling/>

⁵ <http://bit.ly/2H78Qt3>

Raising the bar – from special measures to good in 15 months

*Stuart McLaughlin,
Bower Park*

Bower Park Academy principal, Stuart McLaughlin, spells out the wide-ranging and thorough courses of action that led to a startling improvement

In 2018, Bower Park Academy was one of 135 schools named by Ofsted as having consistently failed to be judged 'good' since 2005. It had received a DfE academy warning letter from the regional schools commissioner in April 2016 and was asked to join the Empower Learning Academy Trust (ELAT), led by Hall Mead School, an 'outstanding' provider. The trust was established on 1 September 2016. In December 2016 Bower Park Academy received a full Ofsted Inspection and was placed into special measures, receiving inadequate judgements in all categories except for personal development, behaviour and welfare, which was judged as RI.

The Ofsted report identified a number of failings to be addressed, including:

1. Leaders and governors had been far too slow to improve outcomes for pupils - progress was inadequate.
2. Previous governors had not held leaders to account or challenged them to improve the quality of education.
3. Performance management was weak.
4. Leaders were not rigorous in their use of self-evaluation, including evaluating the impact of teaching on learning.
5. Teachers were not consistently using the school's feedback policy - too many pupils were unable to move forward with their learning.

6. Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, made inadequate progress.
7. Teaching lacked challenge, particularly for the most able.
8. Assessment processes were not giving leaders the information needed to accurately evaluate the quality of teaching.
9. There was a wide variability in the quality of leadership at all levels.

Fifteen months after this inspection, in March 2018, the school was taken out of special measures and judged to be good across all categories, including overall effectiveness. This constitutes a remarkable transformation in the fortunes of a school in a very short time span. Here are the key strategies that contributed to this rapid improvement.

Initial actions

As a result of the warning notice and joining the trust, action was taken to strengthen and support the leadership of the academy. The governing board was disbanded, and an interim transition board (ITB) was established with a clear and limited focus on improving outcomes for pupils. All business ran through this single forum, which met every six weeks.

The trust put in place Johanna Yates, who was ELAT's proven school improvement lead. Her principal focus was on improving the quality of teaching. ELAT's CEO dedicated time to supporting the academy's leadership team. Faculty links with Hall Mead School were established to support middle leaders of the weaker departments.

The trust immediately launched the SSAT Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP), with three days of high quality CPD for all teachers, and established a calendar of intensive CPD for the year ahead. This gave a valuable framework for rapid improvement in the academy's quality of teaching.

Once the December 2016 Ofsted inspection outcome was known and the absent substantive headteacher chose to retire with effect from 31 December 2016, the trust acted quickly. I was seconded from within the trust to Bower Park on account of my previous experience of leading two schools out of poor Ofsted categories.

Stage 1: Creating the environment for rapid improvement (January to July 2017)

With the full support of the trust, I used the period from January to July 2017 to prepare for transformational change in September. The aim was to create a 'new' school with higher expectations, greater rigour and an unswerving focus on improving teaching and learning. It was vital that the whole school community understood why change was necessary and how the academy would benefit from what was proposed. There were five main changes:

1. An ambitious vision for transformational change: school transformation requires a crystal clear and ambitious vision that provides a roadmap for improvement and gives everyone hope for a brighter future. Hence, the governors and I determined to reset the vision, values and strategy of the academy. Workshops were run for parents, pupils and staff to gather key stakeholder inputs. These were honed by SLT and the ITB before being disseminated to the community to help create the momentum for change and to secure their support and belief in our direction of travel. It was also important to win the hearts and minds of prospective parents, who needed to believe that their child's new school would provide a good quality education in the future.

This vision was equally important in terms of recruiting new staff. It takes a leap of faith to join a school in special measures, especially if, as we did, you recruit teachers from good and outstanding schools.

"Being part of this journey is my proudest moment

professionally so far. Having left an established outstanding school, which outperformed private schools and had a true culture of excellence, joining Bower Park was a true leap of faith. Strategic recruitment of staff and a relentless focus on quality first teaching meant that although I was no longer in an outstanding school, outstanding characteristics were being embedded."

Afolabi Joseph, head of English

2. An effective improvement plan that was fit for purpose: I put in place a very focused post Ofsted action plan (POAP) based on the eight key areas for improvement from the Ofsted report. I knew that HMI would be testing the academy's progress against these during monitoring visits.

Each strand of the plan was delegated to a senior leader to oversee. Each priority had both ambitious interim milestone measures and end of period targets, laying out the steps to achieve the required changes in practice and process that we believed were necessary. For example, although the prior intake of the academy is significantly below national average for KS2 outcomes, we set out all targets in line with national averages. Hence, in order to achieve these, the academy would have to secure rapid progress for all students.

The POAP was judged 'fit for purpose' by HMI in February 2017, and became our road map for improvement. It was also the key accountability document used by the leadership team and the ITB. In effect, all senior leaders were very clear about our improvement strategy, what they needed to do to achieve the targets we had set, and were rigorously held accountable for achieving them by the ITB.

Staff and students were also clear about our key priorities, as they were communicated on posters and displayed in every classroom. They were also regularly referenced in assemblies and staff meetings.

3. A rigorous staffing structure: the leadership structure that was in place when the academy was placed into special measures lacked clarity and accountability. A restructure in place for September 2017 ensured that we had the senior team to drive the improvement agenda. The academy and SLT were remodelled, based on a schools-within-schools model. Leadership posts were filled by way



of a rigorous internal interview process involving the ITB, the trust CEO and me. This created a more streamlined senior team and facilitated a greater focus on progress and the quality of teaching. The post of vice principal was not filled during the interview process. Given the need to have an outstanding senior leader in this key position, the trust seconded their school improvement lead to be VP. The structure, along with procedural changes, resulted in greater accountability for student outcomes at all levels within the academy.

Students were given the choice of the new house names (each house linked to a school of learning)... They chose Edison (Thomas), King (Martin Luther), Rowling (JK) and Moore (Bobby)

4. Cultural change: With the support of the Trust and ITB, I determined that resetting the academy's culture was critical to the improvement agenda. The culture shift was to be engineered through significantly raising expectations. So, I communicated regularly to all stakeholders throughout the summer term that the school was going to be different in September; that we were pushing the reset button. The new staffing structure was crucial, as it signalled a significant change in the way that the school operated and was organised.

Students were reorganised into the new houses, with corresponding changes to their uniform, which meant they knew the school would be tangibly different in the new academic year. Students were given choices about these changes, such as the house names and how forms were organised to give them ownership of what would be different. Each house was linked to a school of learning and students were asked to identify inspirational people who reflected our academy vision and values linked to the subjects in each school of learning. They chose Edison (Thomas) for the School of Mathematics and Technology, King (Martin Luther) for the School of Social Sciences, Rowling (JK) for the School of Communication and Moore (Bobby) for the School of Science and Sport.

5. Immediate actions to secure improvement: although I used this early period to set in place the structures for transformational change, I could not wait until September 2017 to implement improvement strategies. The POAP actions were initiated immediately after HMI approval in February 2017. We set about urgently fixing the weaknesses identified by Ofsted and the trust through our own robust evaluation, but especially in building teaching capability and capacity. Expectations in the classroom were ramped up. There was more rigorous and regular monitoring of the quality of teaching, not only so that staff could receive regular feedback but also so that I could identify where the weaker teaching was occurring. Some staff left the academy as a result of these higher expectations.

Stage 2: raising the bar of expectations (September-December 2017)

With the new structures in place, new staff in leadership positions and a more capable workforce from September 2017 we launched our 'raising the bar' campaign. Staff and students were told that the plan was to be judged Good by Ofsted within a year. The higher expectations that had been set as part of the POAP were re-emphasised and permeated the work of the academy, particularly in terms of classroom practice, pupil outcomes, the quality of work in books, behaviour, uniform and attendance. This was a vital message in changing the culture at Bower Park: the higher expectations were reinforced by leaders through the academy's monitoring and evaluation schedule and meetings and assemblies, to secure buy-in and greater consistency in practice. A new behaviour for learning policy was introduced to support our raised expectations, and enable teachers to teach and students to learn.

There was an unswerving focus on 'quality first' teaching. This was the single most important factor that would contribute to a successful Ofsted. We set ourselves a target that 100% of teaching would be at least good by year end. The message that every student is entitled to receive good or outstanding teaching in every lesson was communicated to all stakeholders regularly, creating higher expectations among students and parents as well as teachers. Three key elements contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching:

1. High quality CPD: if we were to transform teaching, we needed to devote enough time to staff CPD. We held weekly workshops using the TEEP framework, with a clear focus on the areas that we identified would lead to good or better teaching – questioning, challenge and visible thinking. For the latter, teachers needed to find activities that visibly demonstrated that students were being made to think, reason, justify and explain. If this was happening consistently in every lesson, it was bound to have an impact on their learning and progress. We used our lead practitioners to lead sessions and created opportunities for best practice to be celebrated and shared in order to create a buzz around improving pedagogy. The trust provided excellent support from its teaching and learning leader to develop the pedagogy of targeted teachers to secure ‘good’ or make the jump to outstanding.

2. Effective recruitment: we recruited a significant number of teachers from good and outstanding schools to fill posts left vacant by colleagues who determined the journey was not for them. These recruits were able to model the quality of teaching and the high expectations needed to transform pedagogy. The clarity of the academy’s vision and ambition to succeed really aided the recruitment process – new staff were excited to be part of the journey and believed that it was achievable. They were also attracted by the trust’s breadth of opportunity through the teaching school.

It takes powerful vision and ambition to persuade teachers from good and outstanding schools to join one in special measures

“I chose to come to Bower Park Academy for my NQT year as I wanted to be part of a school that would provide me with lots of opportunity to improve my teaching practice. At first I was apprehensive about what to expect, but from the start support and training has always been available. As a result, my teaching has improved a lot and I can see the clear impact this has had on my students’ life chances. I am proud to work at BPA as we continue our journey.”
Laura Bailey, NQT science teacher

3. Rigorous monitoring and feedback: we introduced a pacier, more robust system of monitoring by senior and middle leaders, comprising learning walks, lesson observations, work scrutiny and reviews of student data. These four areas were used to make overall judgements about the quality of teaching over time for each teacher and each department. We changed the focus of classroom-based monitoring so that we were looking through the eyes of the learner. If teachers did not demonstrate our priorities of questioning, visible thinking and challenge they could not achieve a ‘good’ judgement. This meant that teachers really understood what would make a difference and quickly adjusted their pedagogy accordingly. This proved highly effective; by the time of Ofsted’s March 2018 inspection, virtually all teaching was judged to be good or better.

A common feature of schools judged to be RI by Ofsted is a lack of consistency, so we worked tirelessly to ensure consistency in all aspects of life at the academy.

“In order to rebuild staff confidence in the classroom, we had to create a common language for teaching and learning. We drove accountability alongside an abundance of praise, and rapid progress soon followed. Consistency and high morale is key.”
Johanna Yates, vice principal

The rigorous monitoring of classroom practice helped engender greater consistency and ensure the nine non-negotiables that were expected to be evident in every lesson (see figure) were quickly embedded. Line management meetings followed an agenda that focused primarily on outcomes and the quality of teaching, which linked to the monitoring and evaluation schedule. Themes and expectations were reinforced to the wider teaching community through the weekly TEEP workshops.

Senior leaders were also very visible in and around the academy, not just in and out of lessons but at break times and at the start and end of each day. This led to a highly consistent application of policy across many areas.

Another key area of work in this period was to ensure that our SEF was an accurate reflection of



where we were on our journey to good. It was vital for the credibility of leadership in the academy that there was an accurate SEF on each visit that HMI made. The SEF was quality assured by the trust CEO as well as the ITB. We used our monitoring and evaluation data against the criteria in the Inspection Handbook to assess our progress towards good. We also used the Ofsted phraseology in the SEF and in the evidence that supported it. We ensured that the SEF was an honest reflection of where we were at that time – this was important to show HMI that we really understood our school. It meant that when we were ready to show we were good, we really were! We knew that students' books would play a vital role in the inspection process. They provide inspectors with a clear record of learning and progress over time. From day one of the academic year we talked to students in assemblies and lessons about the importance of their exercise books. We made clear our expectations about how they presented their work. We developed a highly effective marking and feedback policy. Each term, staff were given time to create marking checklists so students had success criteria ahead of learning time. The checklists also helped to demonstrate progress over time in books. We used half-termly workshops for all teachers, led by the vice principal, to ensure high levels of consistency in marking. Plus, as part of our monitoring schedule, staff were given regular feedback on their marking and the quality of work in books. Consequently, when inspected in March 2018, our books provided effective evidence of consistently good progress over time.

Stage three: 10 weeks to good (January to March 2018)

The academy received its second section 8 monitoring visit in December 2017. The feedback made clear that rapid progress was being made and that the academy was in reach of a 'good' judgement. So we launched a campaign called *Ten weeks to Good* with staff and students. It set out a short term, highly focused action plan based on the December inspectors' feedback. The purpose of the plan was to really embed the good practice that had been developed over the previous year, so there would be a high level of consistency across the academy. We also used the feedback received to address any areas for improvement that would stop us being judged good.

Listening to inspectors discussing the lessons they had observed during the December monitoring visit made it clear that the quality of questioning was of high importance. We made this a focus in our weekly CPD workshops, to ensure that questioning skills to provide challenge and advance learning were consistently embedded in every teacher's practice.

BOWER PARK ACADEMY – CLASSROOM NON-NEGOTIABLES

In order to secure greater consistency in classroom practice across the academy, the following non-negotiables have been agreed:

1. At the start of every lesson, a staff member will be at their door managing transition, meeting and greeting students to ensure a quick entry and rapid engagement. Students will be dismissed in an orderly fashion at the end of the lesson.
2. There will be 5 minutes reading at the start of every lesson. Registers will be taken promptly during this time.
3. Every lesson will have a lesson objective and 2 or 3 learning outcomes that are shared with the students.
4. There will be a seating plan for all classes – identifying ability levels and key groups, especially most able and disadvantaged students. Teachers will know who these students are and plan to engage and challenge them accordingly.
5. The academy's expectations regarding presentation of work will be followed. There will be high expectations concerning presentation, quality and quantity of work.
6. Books will show evidence of regular good quality subject specific marking/feedback and student responding in purple pen.
7. In academic subjects, journals and equipment will be out on desks.
8. A range of TEEP activities will be evident including targeted questioning using Blooms/Anderson's hierarchy, especially with regard to the most able.
9. No students will be sent out of the lesson unless it is urgent. When this is necessary, they will be given a note.

Another area that the inspectors were clearly looking for in lessons was evidence that students were being made to think and reason. So we launched our ‘think it up’ campaign, whereby teachers were encouraged to plan activities that made students think. Staff shared their successes and this best practice was celebrated at every opportunity with both teachers and students.

During the December visit, inspectors had informed us that not all students were able to articulate their learning and progress, so we worked hard to equip them with the vocabulary required to discuss their learning. Every student received a small card detailing five key questions that they should be able to answer about their learning. Pupils were regularly asked these questions by SLT when on learning walks – so they became practised in answering them.

The final piece of feedback that we wanted to act on from December was attendance. In December our overall attendance was in line with national averages. However, persistent absence for disadvantaged students was an issue. Each house’s director of learning was tasked with engaging particular borderline students – and their parents – to improve attendance. We wanted to target the students where we could make gains in attendance over the ten week period. Hence, they targeted the disadvantaged students whose attendance was hovering between 88% and 92%. By focusing in on these students, using rewards and competition to help them improve, we were able to move their attendance above the 90% threshold for persistent absence.

5 QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. *What are you learning?*
2. *How are you doing?*
3. *How do you know?*
4. *How can you improve?*
5. *Where do you go for help?*

The trust was very effective at monitoring our progress but I also wanted external verification. We also wanted to know any further areas for improvement, so I engaged a senior consultant from Essex Education Services to test our self-evaluation and identify further areas for improvement. She interviewed middle and senior

leaders and conducted learning walks to validate the ‘good’ judgements being made in our SEF; this greatly boosted the self-belief within the wider leadership team. Her review of progress data would help to ensure the information presented to Ofsted was concise and clearly showed progress in all year groups and across key cohorts. Her input helped to ensure a laser sharp focus was maintained on improving the few weaknesses still evident.

Students were asked to nominate staff members who had made a difference to their learning, and the staff members’ awards were presented in assembly

The ‘10 weeks to good’ campaign also prepared our school community for the next inspection. Without doubt, the staff were the key to the academy’s improvement and we were very conscious to maintain high staff morale. Staff achievements were very publicly recognised; staff frequently presented and shared best practice with other teachers through ‘risk it for a biscuit’. Effectively, staff were encouraged to take risks with their teaching to ensure that students were being challenged. If they did, they received a packet of biscuits – a small prize, but it proved hugely successful.

A ‘did you know?’ campaign encouraged each department to identify student achievements, which were then plastered on the walls of the academy in a celebration of success. Students were asked to nominate staff members who had made a difference to their learning, and these awards were presented in assembly. This positive and encouraging approach had an immense impact on generating excellent staff morale that continued to underpin the drive to be better.

Parents...

We wanted to maintain and galvanise the support parents had shown for the academy’s recent improvement. Parents are a key constituent of a school community and through open dialogue can be great supporters. We engaged with parents on setting the vision and continually kept them informed about the improvement journey through regular newsletters and an open parents forum.



Both the trust chair and I would conduct ‘open mic sessions’ with parents. Leading up to the final inspection, parents were encouraged to complete the Ofsted parent view survey, and, because of the continual dialogue, the academy felt confident that positive feedback would be forthcoming.

... and students

Obviously, an inspection cannot succeed if the students are not on board. We were very clear with students that they had a part to play in our 10-week journey to ‘good’. We constantly communicated our high expectations about behaviour, learning, and uniform. We held learning assemblies reminding students of their responsibility in terms of effort, responding to feedback and taking pride in presentation. Every assembly included opportunities to recognise and reward students for their successes.

I held student lunches that enabled them to have direct input into the academy plans. This gave me an opportunity to find out what they liked about Bower Park and any areas they wanted to improve. We also wanted students to respect the environment. Hence, we gave the school council £1000 per term from our maintenance budget to buy equipment for the school. However, any vandalism or damages came out of that money. As a result, vandalism became non-existent and students received benches for the playground and new lockers. Consequently, we built a stronger sense of community and belonging in the student body.

The final element of our preparation for the next inspection was to ensure that the paperwork we presented to Ofsted was appropriate and effective. We knew from previous monitoring visits that inspectors do not have time to read through reams of evidence. Hence, the senior team analysed the ‘sources of evidence’ section in the Ofsted handbook, and during senior leadership meetings we identified appropriate evidence on one page for each of the four Ofsted areas. In particular, we made sure that we had very clear evidence to show that students were making good progress in all year groups. This process enabled the leadership team to reinforce the common view that we were good and to quickly provide, when asked, supporting evidence for the judgements made in the SEF. Leaders were familiar with and spoke the language of ‘good’ which was congruent with the underlying evidence.

Conclusion

The journey from special measures to good has been both challenging and exciting.

“It has been a challenging bus journey full of ups and downs, but it was all worth it. It is amazing to finally be a good school. The sky is the limit for Bower Park now.”

Bola Mosuro, head of RE

A key feature of the success was setting the ambition to achieve ‘good’ within 18 months and then to plan accordingly. The crucial elements in the process were:

- Developing a clear and ambitious vision that the whole community could buy into – and then setting challenging goals on the pathway to the shared destination.
- Changing the culture in the academy by raising the bar of expectations throughout the community.
- Restructuring the school to ensure function and accountability were crystal clear and then appointing the right people to the right roles.
- Having an unswerving focus on improving teaching and learning – only through high quality teaching could the academy secure better outcomes for students.
- Being focused and rigorous about developing teaching practice and appointing only high-quality staff; at the end of the day it’s all about the talent that is placed in front of the students!
- Engaging the students so they knew and understood what good and outstanding teaching looked like – and that it was their right to receive it.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have helped the academy move forward so rapidly; without their support this marvellous achievement would not have been possible. In no particular order these include: our students and their parents, all the staff at the academy, the leadership team, governors, the CEO of the trust, the ELAT Improvement Team and the trust board. We also need to thank the Regional Schools Commissioner, Tim Coulson, who provided the catalyst for Bower Park to join ELAT. Without this move, the rapid journey to good would not have been possible.

Find out more about TEEP: ssatuk.co.uk/teep



Student leadership in alternative provision

*Rebekka Ashmore,
Stone Soup Academy*

Rebekka Ashmore, Assistant Head of Engagement, Stone Soup Academy, describes the effective use of a wide range of extracurricular activities

Stone Soup Academy is an outstanding alternative provision based in inner city Nottingham. We have almost 80 students on roll, all having experienced being excluded from mainstream education, for a myriad of reasons. Our students arrive with their confidence bruised: they feel rejected, they lack self-esteem and mistrust the adults that are there to help them. They certainly don't feel that they are leaders. At Stone Soup it is our mission to reverse this negative beginning and provide a positive environment in which our learners can start to believe in themselves again. There are many ways in which we do this, one of them being student voice and leadership.

It could be argued that student leadership is the most useful extracurricular activity during a student's time in education.

The experience and abilities gained from learning leadership skills within the school will be valuable beyond their time in education. Hands-on experience strengthens skills such as planning, communicating, team working and decision making, all of which are of immeasurable value throughout any young person's life – but are especially important for the students who find themselves at Stone Soup Academy.

We believe that young people have a right to be listened to and express their views on matters which are important to them; and also to have their views taken on board to improve their experiences. For this reason, students are encouraged to apply via email for our student council, and selected on their attitude, engagement and behaviour around the school, as well as attendance and punctuality.

The student council has taken a lead on issues such as school meals, trips and student wellbeing. They have held meetings with staff and school

governors in order to implement changes to issues they feel would benefit themselves and their peers, for example changes to the menu and games room etiquette. And their ideas have been used for end-of-term trips. They have created questionnaires to ensure their fellow students feel listened to and can represent their thoughts, feelings and opinions on issues that affect them.

We don't judge our students on their behaviour, only their capacity to lead, their ability to grow as students and as leaders.

We give them all a chance to develop

You might think that such activities happen in very many schools, and indeed they do, to lesser or greater degrees – but not with the learners who end up coming to Stone Soup. In their mainstream schools they never experienced this degree of trust





or opportunities for leadership, it just didn't happen for them. But we don't judge our students on their behaviour, only their capacity to lead, their ability to grow as students and as leaders. We give them all a chance to develop.

Our student council meetings have developed students' confidence in speaking to adults, some of whom they have never met before. It has allowed them to feel respected and empowered and most importantly to feel valued, thus enhancing their self-esteem.

We believed we could develop the leadership role that the students on the school council were adopting and support them in gaining a qualification in student leadership. The qualification will encourage them to focus on skills such as

commitment, organisation and planning, communication and being accountable alongside other skills required to be an effective leader. The students will have to demonstrate their leadership skills in ten areas and will be putting together a portfolio of evidence to highlight the leadership roles they have taken on within the school. It is hoped the SSAT student leadership qualification will capture the attention of future colleges and employers, and the experiences the students have and the skills they acquire will help them become successful young adults.

At Stone Soup all staff model the leadership qualities we wish to embed in the students and we teach them how to be responsible. What better way for the students to gain leadership skills than to give them the

opportunity to have hands-on experiences where they can strengthen these traits and be offered rich opportunities to demonstrate learning?

In the youth hostel residential, students who had previously been reluctant to take on leadership roles in school were suddenly taking charge

In November 2018 we put on two residentials to YHA Edale where the students took part in numerous activities to enhance their team-working skills, independence and interpersonal skills. Power relationships changed, the teacher was no longer the expert and

students who had previously been reluctant to take on leadership roles in school were suddenly taking charge. Being in an environment that lacked the pressure of a classroom strengthened staff and student relationships. This was evidenced back at school, where we saw the positive results of these trusting relationships with students being more willing to ask for the help they needed and seeking out leadership roles. The students returned with a different mindset and new-found confidence having worked alongside staff and their peers to achieve things they didn't believe they would ever have the confidence to do.

Motivation, organisation, willingness to contribute and follow through are key to any student leader's success and to train student council members in these invaluable life skills they will be working alongside staff to plan and organise the next celebration evening at the academy. Celebration evening is a parents evening with a twist – we focus solely on the positive student qualities and progress. Being involved in the organisation of this event will

again give students hands-on experience of leading in the school. It will involve meeting with staff and students and delegating tasks. They will need to recognise not only their own strengths and weaknesses but others', and will be expected to communicate with outside companies to arrange and order items required for the event. To ensure the event goes smoothly their organisational skills will need to be on point. Yet, although a lot will be expected of them, we wholeheartedly believe that every skill they learn and consolidate for this task will be something they will use in their future lives. If they can acquire and develop these valuable attributes now while at Stone Soup, the improved self-belief and positive growth mindset will prepare them for the diverse challenges in the community and wider world.

The academy recently played host to motivational speaker Jim Roberson from Independent Thinking who worked with 30 of our students including the student council. Jim's belief is that young people should grasp the opportunities they have and understand that whatever

has happened in the past there is always another way; this is a perfectly fitting message for our students and is something he definitely passed on to them. The lessons he shared were from his own life growing up in the Bronx, and the message he has for young people is "it's not what others do for you, it's what you do for yourself." Jim shared leadership skills with our students, and it was inspiring to watch them take in what he was saying. In front of them stood a successful man whose beginnings had been very similar to their own: this gave each student the self-belief to take a lead on their own lives and want to be the creator of their own destiny.

All students involved said they felt empowered and motivated after listening to Jim, but a stand out comment was from one student who left the session stating "I learned I can be somebody, I'm going to be somebody."

It is far from an easy journey for our young people and in reality we have a relatively short time with them. But we do our utmost to make that time count, as we passionately believe that our students, despite their beginnings, can become leaders of the future. Creating unimagined futures is what we do.



Find out more about SSAT's Student Leadership Accreditation scheme, which is free as part of SSAT membership, at ssatuk.co.uk/sla

Creating a lively and robust student voice: the first decade of a school specialising in citizenship

Steve Walker
Bradford Academy

Steve Walker, assistant vice-principal for teaching and learning at Bradford Academy, describes how student voice is central to life as a citizenship specialist school

Student voice has always been a core strategy at Bradford Academy. The school opened in 2007 with citizenship as its specialism. It was recognised that, due to the disadvantaged area that the school served, it needed to provide its young people with the wider skills, knowledge and confidence to thrive in and indeed lead their community.

The ethos of the school is: Every child known, valued, understood and guided. This from the start has meant that we see our students as partners in our endeavours and as agents of social change. The vision for student voice was that it would flow through the school, touching on all aspects of policy, strategy and action. It would become part of our fundamental culture. To use cake as a metaphor, student voice would provide a visible thick layer of goodness no matter how the school was sliced, rather than a pretty cherry on the very top.

The challenge we have faced in achieving this has been to create a strategy that provides:

- Opportunities at all levels for student involvement
- Training and skill development for all students who wish to engage
- Clear outcomes, so students see their leadership and involvement effecting meaningful change

- Staff who engage with the process, so they automatically see involving students in decision making as the Bradford Academy way
- A robust but flexible student voice structure that remains effective once the adults step back from day-to-day detail management.

The last bullet point will provide the focus for this article: building an effective student voice structure from the start has allowed for much of the other provision to coalesce around it.

The keystone of student voice here is the form group representative. Each form group (in all key stages 3, 4 and 5) elects their student representative early each September. Interested students put forward their names as candidates, then produce and deliver presentations to their forms in the school's 'election week'. This results in a lot of activity which strengthens traditional British values and ideas linked to our citizenship specialism. Students then vote in a secret ballot for their chosen representative, resulting in upwards of 50-60 form reps. We respect the choices of the students.

"You can make a positive impact, and help people in many ways."

Corey McKenny – Form Rep

Form reps are not just figureheads, they have a job description for which they are held accountable, with meaningful tasks within their form and year

group. They support their tutors and heads of year in their day-to-day jobs such as leading discussion or managing the entry and exit of students in year assemblies. They also provide a pool of student leadership talent to draw on for any event or situation where student input would be appropriate and valued. For example we train some to sit on recruitment panels, act as tour guides during open days and ambassadors to greet visitors.

“I feel I am part of something bigger than me.”

Ellis Cullearn, year 7 student leader

The next level of student leadership is the year leaders. These roles are fewer in number; the head of year deciding on a number which suits their needs (robust but flexible) and are recruited rather than elected. Students are invited to write a letter of application for their position against a clear job description. They must also stand up in front of their entire year group and explain why they feel they have the qualities required. Ultimately the head of year chooses the strongest candidates, reflecting the level of responsibility we place on this position and real-world experience. Often heads of year will use unsuccessful applicants to lead on other student voice activities such as running the year team charity committee. We try hard not to waste any talent or turn away any enthusiastic student.

“Being a student leader, I have learnt and enhanced many skills that I can carry into both higher education and the world of work. It really boosted my UCAS application as universities are always looking for students with extra-curricular commitments. This made my application stand out from others.”

Hanniah Rehman, chair of SSLT 2018-19

The top of the student voice chain is the senior student leadership team (SSLT). This group of 20 students is made up of ten Year 12 learners and

ten Year 13. The group is now self-sustaining, with occasional guidance from staff. The Year 13 students are shadowed by and train their Year 12 counterparts. The following year the new Year 13 students then recruit and interview their Year 12 replacements.

The SSLT act as the managers of several student voice activities within the school and are expected to be the face of our student body at key events throughout the year: meeting potential new staff at recruitment evenings, speaking to parents and carers at parent evenings, hosting the academy award evening and updating school governors about their activities.

Between the SSLT and the year leaders is a whole raft of other student voice groups known as ‘bubble groups’, who demonstrate the liveliness of student voice at the school and how it is part of our culture. The groups can bubble up at any time for any length of time. Current groups include sporting elite, librarians, prom committee, anti-bullying mentors, reading mentors, digital leaders, and the Diana Award, to name a few. Many of the bubble groups are set up by the pastoral team or the learners themselves, often reflecting the changing priorities of the school or community.

Student Voice Congress

Stage 1: In November each year form reps lead a planned discussion within their form groups on issues that students want to raise. The rep’s role is to lead the discussion, while the tutor documents it. The outcome is a maximum of five issues the form want the rep to take forward on their behalf. At this stage we do not block any ideas and students are free to have a wide-ranging debate.

Stage 2: The form reps then present their five issues to a year group meeting, and the year leaders along with the head of year filter the issues from all forms down to a final five. At this stage many of the more outlandish ideas and issues are culled by the students themselves.

Stage 3: The student voice congress. In January the SSLT leads a congress where four year leaders from each of years 7–11 meet. This is a high-profile event in the school calendar, and the chosen delegates are treated as professionals. For example they receive a delegate pack and a letter home explaining to

parents and carers the significance of attending the congress. They are expected to attend it not in school uniform but smart 'interview' type clothing. The congress is opened with a keynote speech by the secondary principal and closed with an address from the executive principal. Throughout the day senior leaders, heads of year and governors will drop in to engage in the event. Refreshments and lunch are what we would serve to visitors or staff.

The day itself is divided into four sessions. In session 1 the student groups develop a deeper understanding of the issue they have been allocated through discussion and research. The emphasis is on evidence-based solutions; they support their decisions and ideas with examples chosen from research and best practice from other schools. Session 2 is all about giving something back to the delegates. Students receive training in creating effective action plans, last year delivered by a project manager from Yorkshire Water. This training emphasises to the students that the ability to plan is an essential life skill and that their action plans will make the difference between success and failure in bringing about change.

In the third session the delegate groups come together and plan how they are going to address the issue they are working on. This will include: what do they want to do? Who will they need to speak to? What resources do they need? What is the timeframe? Once this is completed, the groups put together a presentation in which the whole group will present their plan to the congress. After lunch, in session 4, delegates come up in turn to present their action plans to the assembled delegates, plus staff and governors. This provides an authentic audience for their presentations.

After the congress the SSLT will spend the remaining months of the academic year (outside of lessons, etc) focusing on managing the action plans to fruition. The first task in this process will be to put together a video broadcast which outlines to the student body the solutions they aim to achieve for the issues raised. This helps to show students that their concerns have been listened to and ensures that the student leaders are held accountable. The delegates will work alongside their SSLT leaders and others to deliver on their promises.

So far this year, as a result of input from the delegates:

- The school is looking at diverting money from replacing the public announcement system into replacing the canteen furniture. Water fountains will be replaced and more installed. Yorkshire Water have been approached to sponsor a water bottle for every student at the academy.
- The reward system has been reviewed and the number of points required to achieve certain prizes reduced as the levels were set too high.
- A working party of students is working alongside a staff lead practitioner on developing clubs and electives that students would want to attend.
- Finally, a working party to provide free healthy breakfasts to all who want one now includes students from the congress who were focused on food and drink as an issue.

Naturally, not all their plans and ideas will succeed. National agendas, school policy, the law, health and safety and of course the budget will all contribute to reining in some of their ideas. This will lead to some frustration, but hopefully the plans will evolve to accommodate unexpected barriers. However, a vital life lesson is being learned: when something fails to happen as desired at least now the students have been involved and understand the reasons why.

The congress is a key event in our student voice calendar but it is only one of many, and I hope this article shows the impact that using students as partners for positive change can have in school culture.



Teaching metacognition in transactional writing

*Lewis Meadows,
Meols Cop High School*

Lewis Meadows, English teacher, Meols Cop High School, describes his approach to enabling students to communicate, persuade or inform through their writing – a logical approach that could apply to a number of teaching tasks and subjects

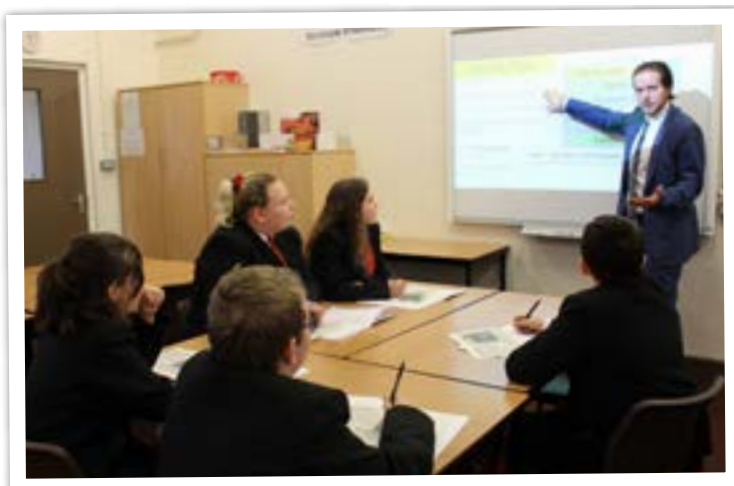
Metacognition has been (in my opinion, lazily) labelled “thinking about thinking”. This definition isn't very helpful when trying to improve students' ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their work.

After listening to Alex Quigley (@HuntingEnglish) speak about metacognition at the Festival of Education and reading the EEF's guidance, I felt that implementing metacognition strategies into my classroom would help students with extended writing tasks. Student comments like “I don't like planning... or self-assessing!” are too common for my liking, and this approach could also reduce some of my own frustrations when students are ineffective at applying the knowledge that I know they have.

Plan, monitor and evaluate

Quigley used an analogy that stuck with me. Let's say you have a conference or event in Southport... The first thing you will do is plan how you are going to get there. “Is the train more practical than driving? How long will it take me to get there? What time will I have to leave if I'm to get there on time (and grab the best of the biscuits)?” This is the planning aspect. You can't just ‘set off’, you would arrive too early/too late and the journey itself would be incredibly irritating. You can see the





comparison; students who just ‘set off’ on their writing journey are usually ineffective compared to those who craft a carefully constructed plan beforehand.

The monitoring aspect comes into play when you are ‘en route’: it is the reactive, adaptive decision making. “Are there any roadworks or train delays? Am I on track to arrive on time?” This relates to the type of questions students should be asking themselves while writing. “How much time do I have left? Am I on track to finish? Do I need to deviate from my original plan?” These are the decisions that tacit, expert thinkers will unconsciously make to achieve their goal.

Finally, the evaluation aspect is considered once the journey is complete. It leads to awareness of how effective the original plan was, and analysis of the decisions made in monitoring. “Would I get the train next time, or would driving be easier?” Within the classroom, this is the self-assessment of work and the conscious decision to make changes (small or large) next time.

Metacognitive strategies would be invaluable in transactional writing, as students are forced to adapt their writing, depending on the given tasks. My first step was to decide: what exactly do the students need to plan, then monitor, then evaluate their transactional writing?

These success criteria could work for all of the transactional tasks, from a speech for the elderly to a leaflet for a zoo:

- Purpose (what is the point in the task, what are the reasons/arguments/topics?)
- Audience (who is the writing for, how can the students prove they know this?)
- Layout (how does the writing need to be organised, any special format requirements?)
- Tone (what is the formality of the writing, what are your feelings and attitudes?)

These skills should be taught individually and explicitly, and students need to be competent with them if they are to be successful. I encourage students to see this as a process, rather than just a success criterion.

This is where the planning comes into play: students can (quickly) plan for these before starting their writing.

How it's done: the four stages

First of all, the purpose: what are the key reasons/arguments/topics for discussion? I usually ask for three with a lower ability group, and four or five with a higher ability group. This takes practice, as students need to become more confident at selecting which ideas are relevant to the task.

Next, the students should consider their target audience. I ask them to prove that they recognise their target audience by relating to them within the writing. In an informal letter, this could be a past ‘memory’ to show that there is a history between the writer and the reader. In a review, it could be a reference to the type of people who are expected to use a particular product or visit a particular restaurant.

Following this, the students should think about how their given task is organised. Some transactional tasks need a catchy title, while others need subheadings and a summary conclusion. Again, these are

Transactional writing

A notoriously difficult section in the GCSE English non-fiction paper, transaction writing requires students to respond to two unseen tasks from a total of six possibilities; each task is likely to have a different purpose, audience and layout

points that can be carefully considered in a plan before the student starts to write.

Finally, based on the purpose and audience, the tone of the writing should reflect the writer's chosen viewpoint and have an appropriate level of formality.

All of these skills can be modelled and taught explicitly, but I feel that the important part is getting the students to plan for them as a process.

Most of the transactional tasks (excluding report writing) require a persuasive aspect, so it's also important for students to be confident at persuasive writing. I usually split this into two skills: writer's techniques (such as the AFOREST techniques) and counter-arguments. Students should perhaps jot down a list of the techniques and counter-arguments they intend to use (planning), then they can tick them off as they are writing (monitoring). With a lower ability group, I might ask for three different techniques and a single counter-argument. Higher ability groups might be asked for five different techniques and two or three counter-arguments.

Finally, some of the tasks require students to be 'lively' and 'engaging', perhaps using humour and wit or showing some character through the use of sarcasm and puns. I simply decided on a 'lively' skill, where students are to make an effort to use humour, sarcasm, or wit.

This, I've found, is the hardest to teach. How do you teach people to be funny? Although John

Cleese and David Jason have (remotely) helped me out, I don't really have the answer to this question, but what I can say is: be explicit about some strategies the students could use. I picked four comical strategies for teaching (eg, rule of three, with two serious comments followed by one ridiculous comment; hyperbole or comparison for comedy effect). This can be difficult to plan for: perhaps take the time to deliberately practise these with your class in lesson time and then they will have some tools to achieve 'liveliness' on the day!

You can deliberately practise bringing all of these skills together by giving students a transactional task and asking them to write a single paragraph that contains a purpose argument, a reference to the target audience, a layout feature (if applicable) and an example of an appropriate tone. Take this further by asking for a range of persuasive language techniques and a counter-argument within the paragraph. If required, liveliness can also be a part of the criteria. Then, student paragraphs can be developing into well-considered arguments with a range of skills on display.

The final step is after writing (evaluation). Students should self-assess where they feel they have achieved the skills, and set themselves targets for next time. In successive tasks, students should write their prior targets at the top of their work or as part of their plan, to focus on and actively monitor during the task. As the teacher, when I provide feedback after marking

an assessment, students will write the targets that I have given them at the top of their page on the next transactional task. At the end, they will highlight where they feel they have met those targets. I will then provide new targets, and the cycle continues.

Tips:

Overall, make the skills you need to teach explicit to yourself and your students

Teach the skills in isolation to improve student competency and confidence.

Model the planning, monitoring and evaluation aspects, then ask students to provide evidence of their pre and post thinking (planning and evaluation).

Encourage accurate self-assessment of the skills and provide your own feedback based on the skills (a grade is not useful without the context to improve).

With all this, students should start to improve their metacognition skills and refrain from asking questions such as "why do I have to plan?" and "what's the point in self-assessment?"

My message, then, is: be explicit about your tacit thinking and guide students to apply the same strategies in their own writing.

References

<http://bit.ly/2TaGHbR>



Exclusions?

Every child really does matter

*Sian Hampton,
Archway Learning Trust*

Sian Hampton, CEO, Archway Learning Trust, explains a comprehensive, and successful, approach in supporting the children most at risk of exclusion

Permanent exclusions have been a controversial topic for many years. There are schools that undertake many and those that choose not to. This article is not intended to make any moral judgement or pretend we have all the answers, but this is an issue we have wrestled with and these are the conclusions that our trust has come up with.

Archway Learning Trust is a medium sized trust based currently in Nottingham city. It is a faith based MAT and has been grappling with the significantly higher than average numbers of permanent exclusions in Nottingham city for some time. Nottingham has some of the worst permanent

exclusion data in the UK, with on average three times more children being permanently excluded than anywhere else in the country. Of the 445 students permanently excluded from English state schools in the year 2016/17, 77 came from Nottingham. In the same period 0.14% students across the East Midlands attended pupil referral units (PRUs); in Nottingham this was 0.55%.

Our trust was faced with a dilemma. We either continued contributing to those numbers or took a different approach to some of the most vulnerable and challenging students in this city.

Contextually Nottingham serves some of the worst deprivation in the country. Three of our five schools have large numbers of students in the bottom 1% of deprivation in the country, which only rival Tower Hamlets and Middlesbrough. These students have



complex problems, their families have often found school a negative experience themselves and they find studying a challenge often due to learning needs that have emerged during their schooling or not been identified at all. High numbers in the pupil referral units in Nottingham meant that permanently excluding students could equate with their education being off site, sometimes unstructured. In many cases these students fell through the cracks in the system (the system definitely was cracking). Archway wanted to try a different approach and to help reduce pressure on a very pressurised and overburdened system.

Inclusion has always been a fundamental part of our ethos, with two special focus provisions for autistic children and attending to almost a quarter (24%) with special education needs. Students whose needs were emotional and behavioural were well served up to a point; all year leaders at Archway are non-teaching and proactive in supporting and mentoring young people. It only went so far however, and when youngsters exhibited extreme behaviours it was a challenge to find ways to help.

The local authority took the brave decision to support a small number of schools that were trying to avoid permanent exclusions, to pilot some work on avoiding exclusion. They made some money from the high needs budget available, on the understanding that it would not be used to pay for permanent exclusions. The trust added to this money and created three levels of intervention across the trust.

Levels of intervention

The first level of intervention involves assessing students presenting challenging behaviours; undertaking small group work; mentoring; and providing safe spaces at lunch and break times to try and avoid a cycle of poor behaviours from even emerging.

The second level of intervention is a more comprehensive programme aimed at key stage 3 students to provide them with in-class support, key workers and a comprehensive programme tailored to their needs – for example, anger management counselling. The intention at this stage is that these students return to mainstream education.

Those who still need support at key stage 3 go into a separate provision which supports all the secondary schools in the trust. 'Aspire' as it is known, is staffed by fully qualified English, maths and science teachers working alongside mentors, counsellors and highly experienced leaders. They work to ensure that they enable students not only to undertake a full range of GCSE courses, but also plan for post16 progression.

Parents in school

At every stage parents are kept fully abreast of everything that is happening with their child; they are encouraged to come into school as often as possible to support their child. Outside agencies such as the police, YOT, CAHMS, Nottingham Forest FC and social care work closely with Archway staff to ensure every student is supported not only in their education but also with any other issues that might generate barriers to their success.

Nottingham Trent University uses Aspire to train teachers in this specialised area of work

Over the last three years this provision has gone from strength to strength. We have managed to link with Nottingham Trent University, who now use Aspire to train some teachers in this specialised area of work. They also provide mentoring and aspirational role modelling and visits to university and off-site support.

Many outsiders expect staff to have been one of our biggest barriers to this work as the trust has high standards of discipline and expectations. This has never been the case. The inclusive ethos of the trust is something we are proud of and celebrate: there have been almost no incidents of staff refusing to teach students or reintegration being refused. In fact, in many ways our staff are our biggest advocates. They can see the journey that students go on and understand that when they come to Archway as young and not fully formed human beings, it is our responsibility as grown-ups to show them how to behave and interact with those around them.

Downside

The downside of this approach? League tables. Aspire students outperform national PRU data in every measure, but they sometimes do not perform



at the level that statistically they 'should' because of a whole gamut of external factors, often beyond their control. This does depress some of our data and there is no getting away from it. Maybe the new approach of Ofsted focusing on the curriculum offer, its quality for all learners, will help us fight that outcomes battle in the future.

You do not have to be a macho disciplinarian to work alongside these children – but you do have to give them clear boundaries, to be consistent – and to care

Getting the staffing of this provision right has been a challenge. Staff need a very specific set of skills to work alongside some of the most challenging students in the trust. Some of those that have been most successful have been the staff that we felt might be least likely to succeed and the same has been true in the opposite direction. You do not have to be a macho disciplinarian to work alongside these children – but you do have to give them clear boundaries, to be consistent – and to care. We have now begun training our own staff in this work and building a group of highly skilled teachers and mentors to support these young people.

This experience has taught us all that giving up on children is not what we are about at Archway. That does not mean that we will not have to take a difficult decision to permanently exclude in the future; the

concept of never saying never is uppermost in our minds much of the time. But when we see some of the young people at Aspire, listen to them and hear their stories, it fills us with humility to think we have played a small part in giving them a chance to lead a full and happy life as opposed to ending up in a young offenders institute and becoming a suicide statistic.

Our head boy left the trust last year with a handful of wonderful A-levels and headed off to university to read politics. He very much wants to be a politician and has already met Damien Hinds! This young man was manage-moved out of another local school at the age of 12. He was identified as being part of a drugs gang (something he vehemently denies to this day) being so badly behaved he could not continue his education in that school. This was not a permanent exclusion, but he was in danger of that. Yet his life has turned out very differently.

We are training our own staff in this work and building a group of highly skilled teachers and mentors to support these young people

Surely if we want a system that is student centred and cares for the individual – every child really does matter – then we should look long and hard at how we treat the most vulnerable and challenging young people in our school system.





Ice Cold in Attainment? Schools should be rewarded for inclusion – not punished

*Grant Smith,
Kingsford Community School*

Grant Smith, assistant headteacher – inclusion, intervention and transition at Kingsford Community School, examines the stark dilemma facing schools striving to do their best for young people with SEND, in the face of the Progress 8 measure which penalises inclusion

The film *Ice Cold in Alex* is often remembered for the bar scene where John Mills downs an ice

cold beer – his motivation and reward for having successfully faced off 1000 miles of blazing desert, the entire Afrika Korps, quicksand, minefields and a German spy. In fact many will know the film despite having never seen it, from the lager commercials in the 1980s.

There is another scene however that I often allude to when talking about teaching, and that's the scene where the two-ton Austin ambulance needs to

be hand cranked, in reverse, up a huge sand dune. Each crank takes a huge amount of effort to make the wheel turn an excruciatingly small increment. Many teachers can appreciate the analogy of huge effort for tiny increments. And for teachers of pupils with SEND the analogy is strengthened further when, just as they seem to be getting near the top of the dune, the ambulance rolls all the way down to the bottom and they have to start again. It is





this universal understanding of special needs that I write of now. As professionals in the field we know what special educational needs and disability means and the range of challenges that come with it. We know how to address a range of strategies in the classroom. But unless you are a SENCo its unlikely that teachers would know about the hoops that parents of pupils with SEND had to jump through to gain recognition of their child's needs: the miles of red tape, endless meetings and documents to complete, in order to achieve that holy grail of an education and health care plan (or in old money, a statement of special educational needs). Once

achieved, the requirements in this document are statutory and the pupil is legally entitled to the level of support laid out. It shouldn't come as a surprise then that when parents have fought such a long battle to get here they have plenty of fight left in them should schools not deliver. It is their child and their legal right; nobody will fight harder.

So SEND status is hard to come by and bodies are in place to quality assure the process and to protect the integrity of those that are given it. It would be fair then for parents to assume that their child will be welcomed into a school that is fully aware of the pupil's needs and staffed and resourced

to effectively meet them. That's the perfect world, however in reality this is not the case.

As a former SENCo and SEN advisor I spent many hours arm wrestling headteachers over pupil entitlement. Many of them would be looking for reasons why a particular pupil should not be put on roll at their school. "Surely they should be in a special school....", etc.

I am a huge believer in inclusion – as head of inclusion, I literally wear the badge every day. In interview for my current post it was music to my ears when my headteacher said she wanted the successful candidate to

achieve the Inclusion Quality Mark for schools. The IQM award recognises schools for their work with vulnerable pupils in eight categories, from teaching and learning, leadership and governance to values, parents and community. When we did achieve that award, of the 24,000 schools in the UK only 5,000 held it. As a school with a truly inclusive approach fully supported by the headteacher and governors, we were awarded IQM Centre of Excellence status, so were in even more exclusive company: only 300 schools hold this status, most of which are special or primary schools.

There are no rewards for inclusivity, whereas the consequences of not reaching floor standards are dire

We are proud to be members of this exclusive club, but should we be? A club is only exclusive if its clientele are queuing up to get in – do these numbers reflect a reluctance to advertise inclusivity? I have actually been to a school's open evening where the very well respected headteacher in his opening remarks stated: "this is an academic school – if you have a child with special needs don't send them here..."

Once we spoke about how 'every child mattered', which was a call to arms for inclusion. The simple fact is that now with Progress 8 measures, every child counts... and as a result inclusion is given much less importance as school

leaders speculate on their Y11 outcomes. In May this year we saw a TES article written by Dr Bernard Trafford entitled *Finally proof that league tables are damaging* based on research which he said was telling us what we already know, speaking of the unsightly underbelly of education which is unprepared to take risks. Where does this leave our most vulnerable pupils with SEND, as schools actively seek reasons not to take these pupils and the negative equity in Progress 8 that they bring? This in effect means that pupils who are legally entitled to the most help are being pushed away as a result of the current system – which measures all pupils together. In a world of parental choice and league tables, headteachers and other school leaders face the challenge of keeping their school viable. Inclusivity is an expectation, not a requirement of schools. This, combined with current school performance measurement, means that heads have the moral dilemma: the be fully inclusive, or to protect their school from pupils bringing negative equity to the cohort. There are no rewards for inclusivity, however, whereas the consequences of not reaching floor standards are dire.

In the Olympics, if Finnish 100m wheelchair gold medallist Leo Pekka Tahti was put in a race with Usain Bolt he would lose – would probably be dead last. The simple fact of the matter is he isn't in the same race as Bolt because it wouldn't be fair. Yes, he has skills and talent, but they are measured in a different way to his able-bodied peers. So why is it that pupils

who have recognised SEND, who are funded differently and are taught differently with additional access concessions in exams, are yet officially assessed against the identical measures as their peers?

Thanks to teachers and other staff, one severely autistic pupil became independent, literate, numerate and socially viable within his community. Yet from a statistical point of view, he and a few peers with SEND reduced the school's Progress 8 score

I can give one example of a pupil last year who is severely autistic and started school on P levels, made progress but still left on P levels. Pupil N, as I will call him, left school and went on to an appropriate life skills college course – so isn't NEET and his parents had nothing but praise for the school and 'wonderful' staff who had educated and nurtured him throughout secondary school. Pupil N is a truly successful case study in inclusion. This didn't happen by accident; it involved the co-ordinated approach of many staff, and pupils looking out for him in every conceivable way. In short they did their job by making him independent, literate, numerate and socially viable within his community.



For all their efforts, the school was awarded a negative Progress 8 score for this pupil. From a statistical point of view, pupil N and a few peers with SEND reduced the school's total score.

Again in May an anonymous primary colleague penned a TES article entitled *SATs are forcing schools to behave immorally*. It talked about schools that are facing the perceived reality that Ofsted will judge primary schools on KS2 outcomes and progress measures, and that data will be the main focus – this is despite an Ofsted representative saying that data isn't king. As a result there are some immoral and bizarre practices taking place justified by "all schools are doing it – if we don't we will fall behind". There are many stories of pupils identified as most able (greater depth in primary) informing staff that their teacher sat next to them and told them what to write; and in November 2018 the Standards and Testing Agency reported that an increasing number of primary schools were being investigated for maladministration.

The current system is creating a culture of distorted figures which is exploiting pupils and misinforming parents, but what else is to be expected when teachers are increasingly facing disciplinary action because pupils have not made sufficient progress and headteachers are losing their jobs if school results are not improving year on year?

In December last year Dr Adam Boddison called for a strategic

national model for SEND. He recognises that Progress 8 should be good for SEND pupils, as its about progress, not attainment. However when schools ultimately are judged negatively for being inclusive (which they don't have to be) – they will simply stop being so. Appropriate qualifications for many of these pupils don't count towards Progress 8 and in a time of fewer teachers and reducing budgets it is simply not value for money to run these courses. Indeed three-quarters of school leaders are reporting that the new GCSEs disadvantage SEND pupils as they focus more on working memory. This spells disaster for these pupils as they are being turned away or placed in alternative provision before they choose or sit GCSEs – and as things stand, if they do sit their GCSEs the results typically do not do them (as well as their schools) justice.

The solution I feel is relatively simple. Inclusion is not a place, it is an environment – one in which all differences are respected, all pupils regardless of need are welcomed, stretched, challenged and come out the better for it. Where it's not about age-related expectations or being 'secondary ready'. It's about being life ready; remembering the tenets of every child matters – being healthy and safe, enjoying learning, becoming economically successful and productive to society.

When every child matters, everyone does all they can to achieve that goal. When every child counts, there are those

who will look to see who can be discounted. Do we really want to see 100% EHCP pupils in special schools, taking us back 40 years?

Alongside other challenges – rising pupil numbers, an increase in SEND diagnosis, funding reductions, capacity problems in specialist provision – schools need an incentive to take on pupils with SEND. We know that financial incentive is not enough; SEND pupils already receive additional funding. What is needed is something comparable to the paralympics Raza classification model, which determines an athlete's ability to compete and allocates them to a suitable competition which will enable their qualities to be fairly judged.

A Progress 8 formula needs to be generated which caters for allowances such as additional time, finance and support which would create an appropriate weighting for these pupils. Pupil N, whom I spoke of earlier, was provided with triple funding and 100% extra time in exams – if he had double his Progress 8 scores he would have brought home a positive P8 score – with triple weighting it would have been a healthy positive score which truly reflected the time, support and energy that he received at school.

With this kind of motivation and reward (remember the bar in Alexandria?) schools would be competing to have these pupils and not playing games which turn the most vulnerable away.



How to tackle social media crazy students

*Jessica Teal,
Sutton Community Academy*

Jessica Teal, science teacher, Sutton Community Academy and SSAT Leadership Legacy Fellow, describes her strategy for exploiting students' attitudes towards social media, by using it to drip-feed science outside school hours

It's clear that our society is changing: students are mobile phone crazy and seem to get hooked on every social media platform. In a bid to stay relevant, I have launched individual teacher Instagram accounts that are followed by students in years 7 to 13. By following my professional Instagram account, students can engage with learning outside the classroom. This lets me be sneaky – I can drip-feed science into their personal lives during evenings and weekends in an easily accessible and

familiar format, while they are mindlessly scrolling through their news feeds, looking at friends' selfies or unrealistic celebrity physiques.

Students interact positively with my posts – liking and commenting on my pictures and asking questions to further their learning outside the classroom, engaging in a way they wouldn't necessarily do during lessons.

Perhaps even more powerfully, parents can also experience their child's education through this platform. They can see pictures of exciting science experiments or their child's classwork – a great conversation starter over dinner. Parents reacted enthusiastically: one said, "I think this is a great idea – full support from our house!" This parent has



two children at our school (one currently in Y8 and one in Y11). By raising the profile of education at home and by presenting concepts in a format that is familiar to the 'snowflake generation', I believe we can start to change student attitudes.

Presenting this social media concept at the SSAT National Conference 2018 in December gave the opportunity to hear other people's perspectives on my project. Delegates agreed the use of social media to engage our youngsters can be very effective. However, some felt the safeguarding risks of social media might be too great for most school leaders to embrace.

Attitude determines success

The project was based on my philosophy that student success is governed by attitude. For the two years I have been teaching, much of my energy has been spent trying to shape students' motivation, interest and ambition. If that works, their success will follow naturally. This philosophy was reinforced at the 2017 SSAT Leadership Legacy Project launch event, where Baroness Sue Campbell shared anecdotes from her early teaching career in Manchester. She considered attitude as a barrier to education and spoke of how, although initially her students would not engage, she moulded her approach to the community she was teaching in. She spoke to them in a language they understood, amalgamating education and home life to make it relevant. Next, Tom Middlehurst, SSAT's head of policy and public affairs, discussed how a school he

had visited sent conversation starter text messages home to parents, encouraging them to ask their children 'how they were finding simultaneous equations' or 'their opinion on *Of Mice and Men*'.

The launch event not only strengthened my belief that student attitude is the main hurdle to success, but emphasised that by triangulating communication between school, students and parents this barrier could potentially be eroded. Listening to the speakers discuss my own beliefs triggered the spark to start this project. I knew engaging with students on social media would be a bold step, but I hope and believe they will reap the benefits.

The SSAT Leadership Legacy Project offered opportunity to network with senior leaders, headteachers and executive headteachers from all over the country. Rather than taking away specific contacts, email addresses or job opportunities, this networking opportunity gave me something invaluable: perspective. It allowed me to see that strong leaders need, among other qualities, the capacity to broaden their thinking to meet the demands of modern day education; and the strength to take risks. The project taught me that I am willing to take the risk to let my students lead me; let's get attitude right first and the rest will follow.

Find out more about SSAT's Leadership Legacy Project at ssatuk.co.uk/llp



Triangulating communication between school, students and parents can erode the barrier of student attitude, which is the main hurdle to success.



Linking careers to the curriculum

*Sharon Walpole,
CareerMap*

Sharon Walpole, director, Careermap, explains why careers information is important to all school teachers, and offers advice and support.

The spine of the government's career strategy, launched in December 2017, is the eight Gatsby Benchmarks that define best practice for careers provision in schools. One of the key benchmarks that directly affect teachers links curriculum learning to careers. This states: "all teachers should

link curriculum learning with careers. For example, STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths."¹

Every department should be involved

There are clear guidelines of what this means in practice as set out by the Careers and Enterprise Company. They include a whole-school approach: every department should be able to evidence in their schemes of work and

lesson plans how this has been embedded.

How do teachers become confident in talking about careers related to their subject matter if they have only had the experience of academic studies and not working in the related field? It comes down to finding out exactly how your subject relates to which careers. Some are much more obvious than others. To be truly effective, being able to discuss the underlying skills being learned is as relevant as the actual subject matter.



Without being a careers adviser, it is easy to refer to the traditional and most well-known types of careers: doctor, lawyer, teacher, programmer, etc. But each of these career paths has many aspects. For instance, did you know that NHS Health Careers segment 13 different types of doctors, and each has a multitude of roles? These roles can start as a nurse or a technician with lower skills requirements from where you can train up, as well as the traditional university route. And, did you know you could train to be a lawyer through an apprenticeship? This would mean learning on the job and progressing toward a full qualification without accruing any university debt.

Your job as a teacher or school leader is not to advise young people on which qualification path to take, but you can and should have a big influence. Being mindful of the many pathways available will help young people start to think about which they should follow.

It is very easy to assume that doing A-levels and going to university is simply the best way to progress.

Being able to discuss the underlying skills being learned is as relevant as the actual subject matter

That is not the case. Over recent years, university graduates are finding it more and more difficult to gain employment, especially 'graduate level' employment. This is not because the jobs do not exist, or that their qualifications were a waste of time; it is often because they have not really considered what they are going to do with their degree.

It is also startling to hear from employers how many graduates are just not work ready, in that they have not made that link between all their learning and the world of work. Also, many

have not gained any of the highly valued employability skills, especially for that first job.

What can you do?

A starting point in linking careers to the curriculum is researching your own subject area and thinking about not only the subject, but also the skills that are being learnt. Many skills are transferable and not always immediately obvious. Consider simple things like turning homework in on time and to a good standard. Or being on time and prepared for lessons.

It is important to consider not only careers directly related to your subject area, but aspects of your subject that might cross many sectors

One of the key skills employers value is the ability to demonstrate creative thinking – which includes being able



to discern quality sources of information. If a young person has been spoon-fed sources and simply regurgitates what they find, they will have missed the opportunity for those basic skills of finding information and recognising whether the source is reliable. This is a particular issue with a generation that 'googles' everything and relies heavily on Wikipedia. One goal for you is to help them understand that just because it appears online does not make it true. And that Wikipedia is an open-source platform, meaning almost anyone can add to the posts, making entries potentially biased. What is important is encouraging independent thinking and assessment – important skills for success in work, as well as for day-to-day life. Teachers might well highlight such skills in linking careers to the curriculum, along with solving problems, communication and team working.

But back to the subject specific. It is important to consider not only careers directly related to your subject area, but aspects of your subject that might cross many sectors. Teachers of science, maths and technology subjects may think they have the easiest of jobs with this, and in many ways, they do. If you teach science, you can be a nurse. If you teach maths, you can be an accountant. If you teach technology, you can be a computer programmer. It is important to understand that these and a number of other subjects, such as English, are valuable for all careers.

Careers of the future

Change is happening in the world of work. Technology and robotics are likely to replace more and more menial jobs of the future, making some disappear altogether. It is commonly maintained that most people will have more than five careers in their lifetime. Career pathways are more like spider webs; no longer linear. Understanding your skills and their potential applications will be as important as the skill itself. For instance, being good at maths means you are very numerate. It could also mean you have great attention to detail or are good at analysis. These skills are valuable in all sectors.

Ticking the evidence box

One good way to help you find out careers your subject might be relevant to is by enlisting the help of your students!

- Get your students to come up with a list of the skills they think they are gaining from studying your subject.
- Consider what jobs might need those skills.
- Task your students to find as many jobs of the future that might need those skills.
- Have them choose one to create a poster with images and information about one of the jobs.
- Voila! You have started to tick Gatsby Benchmark 4, with clear evidence, and you will have inspiring displays for the classroom.

Good places to find information about careers include industry membership body websites such as Tomorrow's Engineers,

Bright Crop, The IMI, Talent Source Network, CITB and Creative & Cultural Skills. These organisations often provide a wealth of information about their sector and have considerable free online resources for teachers. Of course, this is the specialism of our careers and qualifications magazine *CareerMag*. To save you trawling through the internet, you can subscribe to receive a wealth of inspiring career information to your inbox. We believe it is an excellent and reliable resource to share with your students as well. You can subscribe at <http://bit.ly/2VAG6Nh>.

We are delighted to be working with SSAT to help promote the importance of career education in schools. Please get in touch if we can help you in any way to find any kind of information about careers or qualifications at info@careermag.co.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sharon Walpole is a Director at CareerMap, editor of CareerMag and Head of Friends and Partnerships. Her passion is to provide young people with support and access to quality information about careers and qualifications to help with making the best decisions for their futures. Sharon regularly appears on television and radio as an expert on issues relating to young people.

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¹ *The Careers and Enterprise Company*, <http://bit.ly/2PQ7AiU>

Implementing mastery: a step-by-step approach in maths

Neel Khokhar,
Riverside School

Neel Khokhar, lead teacher for implementing evidence informed practice in maths at Riverside School, describes the year-long approach to enabling students to acquire deep, long-term, secure and adaptable understanding

Just over two years in, I'm still very new to the teaching world. I hear rumours that the teaching community goes through phases of interest and, if maths is going through one now, it must be teaching for mastery. Recently, I have found myself with the formidable task of implementing mastery at Riverside School in East London.

So what is all the fuss about? The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) maintains that “mastering maths means acquiring a deep, long-term, secure and adaptable understanding of the subject.” But this is what all teachers want their students to achieve. Doesn't it suggest we all already teaching for mastery?

The reason behind the need to distinguish ‘teaching for mastery’ from regular, good maths teaching is the East-Asian inspired framework through which it is implemented. The framework used has been adopted from top-performing education systems, such as that in Shanghai and Singapore, whose students, according to the *London Review of Education*, are approximately three years of schooling ahead of the students in our capital.¹

We explored how variation and representation could be used to provide a deep conceptual understanding and encourage students to think deeper, rather than simply move forward

Given its educational heritage and the fact that it has been rolled out in over 8,000 primary

schools, this seems the right time for secondary schools to follow suit. The mastery framework as presented by NCETM is often summarised by the following five big ideas behind teaching for mastery.

Coherence

Connecting new ideas to concepts that have already been understood, and ensuring that, once understood and mastered, new ideas are used again in next steps of learning. All steps being small steps.

Representation and structure

Representations used in lessons expose the mathematical structure being taught, the aim being that students can subsequently do the maths without recourse to the representation.

Mathematical thinking

If taught ideas are to be understood deeply, they must not merely be passively received but be worked on by the student: thought about, reasoned with and discussed with others.

Fluency

Quick and efficient recall of facts and procedures and the flexibility to move between different contexts and representations of mathematics.

Variation

Varying the way a concept is initially presented to students, by giving examples that display a concept as well as those that don't display it. Also, carefully varying practice questions so that mechanical repetition is avoided, and thinking is encouraged.

When working with other maths mastery specialists at CPD events, I was overwhelmed with the sheer variety of approaches each specialist was using in their school.

Variety of approaches

On one hand, you could go all-out mastery – completely mixed attainment classes and sticking strictly to a mastery approach throughout all of KS3 and KS4. On the other hand, maybe you want to pick and choose certain elements of teaching for mastery that you feel suit your school more. It was common

to hear about departments implementing mastery throughout all their year groups while keeping their classes in sets. Likewise, I heard from staff in many departments who intend to implement mastery only in KS3, so they can lock in the fundamentals before moving to a looser implementation of mastery in KS4.

Regardless of how you eventually intend to implement mastery, implementing it all at once and throwing teachers in at the deep end is not the way to go about achieving your aims. I'm sure many schools will find my thoughts on the beginning of the process fairly relatable.

We started our journey in February 2018, with five months left in the academic year. As a then NQT, standing in front of a well-established department and proposing any changes whatsoever to the current model of teaching seemed like a very delicate task. Of course, this task very quickly becomes impossible if the department is not convinced that this new approach will have a positive

impact on the students. Thus, my first goal was to get everybody on board and excited about this new venture. At the time this seemed like a logical but safe way to start. As my department is very forward-thinking and progressive, I was confident that they would enjoy learning about different theories behind good practice. Looking back, however, I think I only narrowly avoided what could have been a major setback in this chapter of our journey (see below).

Together, we explored examples of how variation and representations could be used to provide a deep conceptual understanding and encourage students to think deeper, rather than simply move forward. We looked at examples of problems that uncover deep connections between topics, or require students to come up with multiple approaches. Each of these activities (most of which I took directly from the training provided to maths mastery specialists) clearly had a lot of thought behind them. There is nothing (some) maths teachers love more than being exposed to



new, well thought out activities to get them thinking about their own lessons. Exploring these activities together made CPD productive, but also fun!

The more the department was exposed to different aspects of mastery, the more convinced they were that it is a good approach. However, at the same time, the more content they were exposed to, the more intimidating the implementation phase seemed.

That seems great in principle, but who has the time to put that much thought into every lesson?

I imagine this was a common thought at the time, and it's one I shared to a certain extent. Looking back, we may have walked a fine line between feeling excited about mastery and feeling that it was an unreasonable thing to implement. It seemed to demand teachers turning their attention to a lot of new things.

Before the start of each topic teachers are given relevant information to help with planning, including representations to support learning, examples of deep questions, variation tasks and opportunities to link learning to other topics

Perhaps more experienced teachers and leaders reading this would have anticipated this problem from the beginning. Fortunately, I feel that it became apparent to me just before what would have been the breaking point.

From this point forward, the plan to implement mastery began to resemble a mastery scheme of work in itself – small steps, which are easier to take.

We spent the final term focusing only on variation, exploring its application with our classes and feeding back to one another.

If you are just starting out with mastery, I know that many people would advise beginning with just variation and/or representation – two of the five big ideas. Crucially, these elements of mastery can be implemented without changing your scheme of work. This means you can make them part of your everyday practice, reducing the cognitive load on teachers when mastery is eventually rolled out in its full form.

As the next year began, my priority was to put in place as much support as possible for teachers to use to reduce their workload when teaching for mastery.

The most important thing behind teaching for mastery, in my opinion, is a detailed scheme of work. By ordering topics in a way that ensures smooth transitions from one to another, links are easier to make and students do not feel they can

forget the previous topic and just focus on the current one.

A good scheme also breaks down a topic into the necessary small steps, ensuring that teachers move at a slow enough pace to make time for deep learning. Overall, a carefully thought out scheme of work can remove any difficulties for teachers associated with the coherence aspect of the five big ideas.

To further reduce teacher workload, a document is released before the start of each topic containing relevant information to help with planning. This includes representations to support learning, examples of deep questions, variation tasks and opportunities to link learning to other topics. Once made, these documents form a more detailed element of the schemes of work. They ensure that no teacher is left in the dark about how to approach a topic, and that there is a level of consistency across the department.

While it is still the subject of many of our CPD meetings, in a single year mastery at Riverside has gone from a highly idealistic fantasy to a manageable reality.

Reference

¹ Jerrim, J.; Wyness, G. *Benchmarking London in the Pisa Rankings*. Lond. Rev. Educ. 2016, 14, 38–65.



There's so much more to teaching reading: inferring, summarising and identifying authorial intent

*Montgomery Primary Academy
and Percy Shurmer Academy*

Montgomery Primary Academy and Percy Shurmer Academy achieved a marked improvement in reading standards and developing a love of reading among their pupils, 98% of whom are EAL learners.

It became apparent after the 2016 reading tests that reading at Montgomery and Percy, as we call our primary partnership within Academies Enterprise Trust, was not working.

We had long been outperforming national averages for phonics, and there was little doubt that our pupils could decode and decode well. This however was not translating into children's understanding of what they were reading. We were aware that there were some flaws in how we were delivering reading and had made some changes to our curriculum, but it was only after the dismal results in 2016 (Montgomery, 52%, Percy, 38%), that we truly understood the scale of the problem we were facing.

What were the underlying issues that prevented our pupils from bridging, not a gap, but a chasm? Through research into external sources and our own action research, we found three main barriers to learning:

- Teachers suffered a lack of pedagogical understanding about how to teach reading comprehension
- Pupils did not have enough vocabulary knowledge

- Pupils did not have enough background knowledge to enhance their understanding of a text.

Pedagogical understanding

Like many similar schools, we had decided to move away from guided reading in 2015 and turned to whole-class texts. Yet this in itself did not resolve the issue. We knew that while many of the children performed well with simple retrieval, teaching them the skills of inference was far more problematic.

Most teachers used the well-worn phrase 'read between the lines'. Of course, if you cannot infer in the first place, this advice is of no use whatsoever. Talking to teachers about their subject confidence revealed that they themselves were all competent readers and adept at inferring, summarising and identifying authorial intent. But they needed greater pedagogical understanding in order to ensure children could unlock these skills too.

Vocabulary knowledge

Analysis of pupil work and reading research uncovered one of the greatest barriers to our pupils' progress: understanding the meaning of words within the context of a text. On one hand the pupils seemed to demonstrate excellent understanding – it was one of the reasons why our writing results were outstanding. How could it be that children who could write fluently, with varied structure and incorporating rich vocabulary appropriately, would fail to recognise and understand far simpler words in the texts of others? The reasons for this were





twofold. First, as teachers we spent far more time on teaching and discussing tier three words (when our focus should have been, and is now, tier two words) and second, pupils were not making links from word to sentence, from sentence to paragraph, and from paragraph to a whole text.

Background knowledge

Ever been told a joke that you just didn't get? You understand all the words, you just don't see the connection that makes it funny. For some of our pupils reading was like this. How can you understand why Willie is behaving in the way he does at the start of *Goodnight Mr Tom*, if you are not aware of effects of living in an abusive family? In *Kaspar Prince of Cats*, how can you read with a sense of growing dread that Johnny Trott is boarding the Titanic, if you do not know how that fateful journey ends? The connections we make, and our emotional responses to a book, are as much about our own background knowledge as about the words on a page.

A working party for reading consisted of senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants; its first priority was raising the skillset of all staff through comprehensive training sessions

The fact that 98% of our pupils are EAL learners added a further complexity. This could have been considered an insurmountable barrier, but for us it simply meant that the project needed to be implemented from Nursery upwards.

Through parent voice we knew that families were more confident in supporting their children in maths than in reading. So right from the start, we knew that including all of the school community would be an essential part of the journey.

We put together a working party for reading, consisting of senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants, whose first priority was raising the skillset of all staff through a series of comprehensive training sessions.

These sessions broke down the skills involved in comprehension, and modelled teaching methods. The CPD was heavily sourced from the research we had read, but was adapted and tweaked to fit the needs of our children. An external consultant also supported some of the training.

We chose the core texts for each year group to provide enough challenge (books previously identified as year 6 were moved to year 4) and to enable pupils to experience a range of authors, contexts and language structures. We had decided from the very beginning that every pupil would

have access to their own copy of whatever book their class was reading.

The reading team developed a tight structure for teaching reading that took the children step-by-step through vocabulary, inference, retrieval and authorial intent. Each part of the reading cycle required repeated CPD to ensure staff fully understood it. We continued to track the project's progress through dialogue with children and staff, peer observation, team teaching, and outcomes in books.

This then fed into the training cycle: we adapted, amended and abandoned where necessary.

We continued to track the project's progress through dialogue with children and staff, peer observation, team teaching, and outcomes in books

Adding non-fiction

One of the biggest breakthroughs was the decision to embed non-fiction texts within the fiction cycle. Linking non-fiction to the class texts allowed the children to make huge leaps in their understanding. Non-fiction was no longer a two-week unit every term, but an essential part of understanding a story on a deeper level.

Topics are carefully selected to enhance understanding, directly or indirectly. The reading skills are still taught through these discrete non-fiction lessons, and they are threaded throughout the term to fit in with the storyline of the book. If your class are reading *The Boy in the Dress*, you might expect to also read an article about gender stereotyping or about the differences between transgender and transvestite.

Sometimes, the additional texts we choose, such as Dickens or extracts from a thesis, may be written for an older or more academic audience. Pleasingly, pupils meet these occasional jolts to the reading system with the relish of anticipation.



It wasn't simply what happened in the classroom though. Culturally, there was a shift. We became 'teachers who read and readers who teach'. Families were invited to regular reading workshops, we explained how reading comprehension 'works', and how parents could support children at home, even if the home language wasn't English.

The results were gratifying, with KS2 reading scores improving by over 70% for both schools in two years.

KS2 reading scores			
	2016	2017	2018
Montgomery	52%	58%	89%
Percy	38%	43%	71%

Barriers and steps to overcome them

At the start of the project some resistance from staff was encountered. Many teachers were concerned that the children, as EAL learners, would not have the language to access the newly selected more challenging texts. Part of overcoming this response was to allow colleagues to see that children would naturally find the reading material difficult, but it was part of the teacher's role to scaffold the learning so children could access these texts. This soon paid dividends as staff began to see the links between the teaching of vocabulary and increasing background knowledge, and the children's ability to respond to a text. In order to deliver the amount of training required throughout the initial stages of the project, governors and staff agreed on additional teacher training days and twilight sessions. Meetings with parents explained the rationale behind these days, so the whole community was united in the desire to radically improve reading.

Reading was, and still is, at the heart of the school improvement plan. Initially budgets from other areas were diverted to ensure investment in the reading programme was given precedence over any other subject area. Money was allocated to support from a specialist leader in education, who quality assured the project. The working party team also had a budget for supply cover so that they could meet regularly and visit schools with outstanding progress data. As well as high quality reading

materials, and each child having access to a copy of the text being studied in class, we ordered new home reading books, magazines and comics for the children and a range of books for parents.

To raise the level of professional dialogue, all staff had access to published research material and a range of academic literature on the pedagogy of reading and language. Some staff, who were less likely to read these publications, were given precis of longer reading materials. Every teacher had a small budget for books for their classroom that would enthuse the pupils.

Next steps

Our journey will continue to develop a culture of reading and a love of books for the children and families, inviting parents to family learning sessions and story workshops. With the closing of the local library and funds no longer allocated to the mobile library van, opening up our school library to all local families, and including books for adults to borrow, will be essential.

We still have to realise the vision of 100% of pupils reading for pleasure, using the skills of a competent reader, and will continue the cycle of action research, using our new knowledge and changed assumptions, then implementing and reviewing and evaluating once again.

Reading has become accessible. It doesn't matter so much that the children do not understand every word they read at first. They, and we, have learnt that they learn to understand it – and more importantly, they are learning to love it.

Resources

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Labour's vision for education

*Interview with Mike Kane MP
Autumn 2018*

Mike Kane, MP for Wythenshawe and Sale East, is Shadow Schools Minister

What is your vision for education?

- a. A world-class pedagogic system with the best teachers on the planet, who are trained and prepared to the highest standard. An outward system which is properly resourced.

How are you going to fund it?

- a. There has been in effect £2.7bn taken out of the education system since 2015, which has taken education back to the 1980's and 90's, with crumbling infrastructure and no money for schools to cover the rising costs. The Labour government will make up the shortfall in revenue and capital spend.

How are you going to retain, maintain and recruit quality staff?

- a. 1/3 of all teachers who have been trained have left the profession, and teacher training colleges have 30% vacancies. For every teacher entering the profession, one is leaving and there is predicted to be a 25,000 shortfall of staff.
- b. Therefore, recruitment and retention will be addressed with pay rises for staff. There has not been any real increase since 2008, so an average teacher is £4,000 to £5,000 worse off per annum.
- c. To fully fund the pay review recommendations, as a start, which includes all staff and leadership.
- d. Autonomy for teachers, allowing them to have ownership of their classroom.
- e. Reviewing the assessment regime and workload expectations – and addressing the issue that school and education are not just about preparation for tests.
- f. There will also be an expectation that all teachers will need to work towards a higher degree during their career.

How will you review the curriculum?

- a. Through a Curriculum and Assessment Authority comprising professionals, stakeholders, unions and parents, who will come together to review what the curriculum should look like and how it should be assessed. This is not for ministers to do.
- b. A curriculum built by professionals which is national but could also have subsidiaries for a local curriculum. A curriculum and accountability measure that works for all and that is reviewed every five to ten years.

What is the future for academy trusts?

- a. There will be no new trusts, new schools will be within LAs. New schools or trusts that wish to return to their local authority will be co-operative, with internal accountability.
- b. All schools will be expected to be accountable to LEAs on a sub-regional basis.
- c. The funding for LEA development will come from regional school commissions and within the department. Money will be spent differently, and roles will be created regionally.
- d. Sub-regional work will raise standards for everyone.

Where do you see education in seven years' time?

- a. Funded.
- b. Towards the end of the recruitment crisis.
- c. Schools co-operating at a sub-level basis to improve outcomes.
- d. The end of marketisation and privatisation of school estates.
- e. A common rule book with minimum standards, qualified teachers only, and all state funded schools following the national curriculum.

A fuller version of this article was published in the Leading Edge Radar; Winter 2018.



‘We learn better when we learn together’

Ann Bradshaw,
Ysgol Aberconwy

Ann Bradshaw, assistant head, Ysgol Aberconwy in North Wales, outlines the challenges and benefits of her secondary school working with a cluster of primaries to introduce a teaching and learning framework that provides effective, collaborative CPD

Education in Wales, as in England, is subject to periodic major changes – three in particular at this point and in the near future:

- Implementing *Successful Futures*, the Donaldson report on the curriculum.
- Changing teacher standards, focusing more on learning, pedagogy, and collaborating and learning together.
- The Welsh education authorities, since working with OECD, requiring schools to become learning organisations.

We have been working with our feeder primaries for a long time on transition, and over the last couple of years our umbrella

authority for North Wales education, GWE, has developed primary cluster projects. But with the major changes coming up, which are going to affect everybody, we decided we should have a much more formalised approach to working together. Applying *Successful Futures*, a colleague of mine, Richard Burrows, and the heads from our seven primary schools will work together looking at various aspects of the curriculum, along with pupil voice and years 5, 6 and 7 project work. So we'll all be working together on developing skills for learning.

I had got involved with Schools as Learning Organisations (SLO) from the OECD research, which Wales decided to adopt completely. Since doing SSAT's TEEP (Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme) a couple of years ago, I'd been working on feedback on our performance management systems. This was enabling us to respond to people's needs much quicker than we had in the past.

What is TEEP?

TEEP inspires a collaborative culture and establishes high quality teaching and learning across your school or organisation. Its framework is flexible, validating teachers' expertise while providing insight into new effective teaching strategies, which nurture lifelong learners and improve pedagogical practice.

What we did

We were invited to become a pilot school for SLO, which considers staff and governors as well as children in the ongoing process of learning. GWE introduced this as policy in September 2018. We looked at how we could use TEEP in meetings, in organisation development – how we organised ourselves, as well as the learning cycles. I carried out a training day for staff which introduced SLO as a TEEP learning day, which went down very well. The primary heads leapt on it, saying “let's do TEEP for all of us together.”

I reported back to GWE who then asked me to present it to the Welsh government in Cardiff. The aim is to make sure we are all responding to people's learning needs, and become much more efficient.

While colleagues in the primary cluster group were immediately interested in TEEP, they were worried about the funding for CPD with a primary school team of maybe seven people. But we saw how by working together with other schools, we could make it work. They also wanted to work with people they had worked with delivering the course, which was fine because some of my colleagues had already worked with these schools.

How it works

The biggest impact is the initial training, over two days, which allows enough time for people to practise, to play with the ideas being presented. Then they're all trying different things from what they have done in the past. It was a really interesting couple of days, and clearly Successful Futures and TEEP would work well together.

We divided the groups into reception, year 1 etc, and mixed the groups up over the two days so they could see how these techniques would work with all the different levels. That was really useful.

They'd got to know each other through working in clusters. They were extremely creative, which gave me an insight into primary teaching. Some of their presentations – making films, plays, scenarios – they were really having fun with it. Their reflection the following morning was just how difficult it had been initially for them to do that in front of each other, which encouraged them to adopt a variety of creative approaches, such as different personalities, saying things in a different voice, etc. It was refocusing their training.

Quite a lot of the primaries' staff are part-time: one of them at first would not have been able to come for the second day's training – but after the first day she decided to change her childminding arrangement so she could complete the training the next day.

Challenges

The key element is the collaboration of ideas. It takes quite a jump to go from educational research to 'how shall I do this with my class?' Their feedback showed they were able to experiment, which they don't usually feel they have time for, and have fun with learning.

The group members were coming up with all sorts of ideas during the training – which I'm quite looking forward to seeing when I go into classes next week to see how they're doing.

What originally concerned me as a trainer, and the primary heads, is how infant teachers would take something like the 'experts challenge pack' for their own teaching. I toyed with changing the terminology or using pictures to clarify things for them, for example to help them adapt what they do for their own classes. But there was no need; the understanding and ability to adopt different approaches came from them.

We have five training days a year in Wales, and it's up to schools how they use them, apart from



some directives from the Welsh government. A lot of staff training time is used on admin stuff, if we're honest. These groups have really refocused how they're going to use their training time over the last couple of years, and so have we. We're doing a lot more. We don't get outside people in any more. We've got enough good people here with the staff trained in Level 2 TEEP.

There's an expectation that if you're doing something you should be sharing it. It explores themes, issues, skills, taxonomies etc, and creating the time to think about pedagogy in this way is massively important. I wasn't confident that many schools would be willing to take, say, three of their five training days and make sure that everything else that needs to get done in the school gets done. But it didn't need any convincing – they all decided to do it straight away.

Since then, the primary cluster heads come together every third week, working very closely. Without that it would be very difficult for them to respond to all the major changes that are taking place in Welsh education. One person from one of the cluster schools will go and take part in something and then they'll share that with the cluster. It's a much more efficient way of working.

Three of the heads are now involved in SLO, and two are pilot schools like us.

Keeping the momentum going across the schools will now be a focus of this primary cluster.

TEEP is the format and basis of our professional development programme. We can see the impact we can have on our own learning, as well as the children's. The challenge will be making sure we're all keeping that together, which will come when we've had the Level 2 training from Corinne Settle (SSAT senior education lead responsible for TEEP). We'll then have expert people in each school. I'm discussing with the primary heads who they would like to be their Level 2 people – I've seen people in these schools who would be amazing at that job.

And then we'd like to have a half-termly meeting with all those people so we're keeping it fresh.

Another potential issue is that all our primary schools have first language Welsh, so we made it as bilingual as we could – we had translated a lot of the material into Welsh. They want to get the children thinking in these terms in the classroom, so a lot of the display material will be in Welsh too. We've had a lot of help from another TEEP school with Welsh first language, which has helped, for example, in making Anderson's taxonomy sheets bilingual, so the children know the words in both languages.

Benefits of cluster working

We don't necessarily need to look for training in lots of different places any more, nor do we have to pay heavy money for it. Between the seven primaries, other schools locally and ourselves, we've got a wealth of experience, as everyone agreed after the two days' training. I'm talking to my heads now

about what we can learn from them and they're talking about what they can get from us. For example, looking at our last few years' TEEP development, so they can see how we've implemented it, and give their suggestions about how we can all take it forward together.

In our next year's cycle of training, there will be a primary-secondary day where we share each other's work and findings. And we're talking with GWE about setting up a wider learning community. 'We learn better when we learn together', as one 13-year-old student said to me. I've got this phrase on my wall.

Spreading the message

We constantly try to get the idea behind the TEEP learning cycle around our schools. We don't want the TEEP message being diluted by someone reading a piece of paper and thinking that they've done it. You need to get into playing with ideas, working with colleagues and understanding how it all works. And looking at examples from other sources, and making your own.

It's very forward-looking. All the primary heads couldn't wait to get back into the classroom to apply these things.

Find out more about
TEEP: ssatuk.co.uk/teep

National Extension college can help you out of those awkward timetable clashes

*Ros Morpeth OBE,
National Extension College*

Ros Morpeth OBE, chief executive, National Extension College, shows how their service can support schools by providing a distance learning alternative for a wide range of GCSE and A-level subjects

What are the circumstances in which a school or academy will benefit from using your services?

Generally, the circumstances are to do with gaps in the curriculum or timetable clashes. So a student who wants to do A-level English and history along with classical civilisation may be enrolled with NEC for the classical civilisation course. But there are other situations where, for example, a student has a health problem like ME which makes it hard to attend school on a regular basis. Or we have had cases where a teacher has left due to illness, leaving

a group of students high and dry. Also, because we operate a rolling enrolment we can take on a student who has arrived late in the term.

This service reduces the need for supply teachers or bussing students to other schools for small classes or specialist subjects. And it can maintain subjects such as modern foreign languages when they are threatened by budget cuts.

How do you work with schools generally?

The most usual model is that a school contacts us when there is a gap that NEC can fill. So we might just have one student in a school or several students doing different subjects. For NEC it is obviously better to have a long-term connection with a school because our staff get to know their staff and can





form a good relationship with them. One interesting example this year is a small independent school just setting up and using NEC for all their GCSE and A-level curriculum. We are monitoring this school closely.

What if a student is on your course severely underperforming, or even just not completing the assignments? How do you coordinate with the school in such circumstances?

We provide monthly progress reports to the school, and the NEC tutor will work with the school to try and help. We do say clearly in our brochure that this model works best for students who are well organised, highly motivated and well supported by the school.

While the flexibility of a distance learning course is suitable for many learners, NEC recognises that sometimes more structure is needed, particularly for younger learners. Its 'enhanced service' offers additional student support, guiding them through their course in a personal and more structured manner. It includes proactive contact from their personal tutor and NEC, reminds students when work is due, and enables schools to be involved

as much or as little as they like. Its courses are designed to work on Moodle, and support students with standalone self-study topics including videos, a variety of questions, feedback, and a forum to promote engagement and discussion.

Are there sometimes differences in approach or standards between NEC and individual schools/academies that need to be catered for, and if so, how?

In general, no. But the independent school I mentioned is a Christian school and have, for example, added their own take on the theory of evolution to support their biblical view. However, they were quite satisfied with the content and removing course material was never a consideration (NEC does not remove any of the course material because it is written to meet the specification). Some schools tell us that they encourage students to do some learning at a distance because it develops good time management and promotes independent learning.

We have just launched GCSE astronomy, A-level further maths and AS thinking skills. We also offer non-mainstream subjects like philosophy. It is worth noting that NEC is an exam centre in its

own right and this enables us to authenticate and mark coursework for subjects like A-level English language, English literature and history. We then transfer the student to the school to sit their written exams.

Our website is frank about the limitations of this remote service education service. The free guide for schools includes a section headed: 'Know your students: will this service work for them?' It includes: 'NEC is proud of the quality of our courses and of the excellent tutorial support which is at the heart of what we offer. But we would be the first to say that online learning is not suitable for all students. It works best for committed students who have a mature approach to learning and are genuinely interested in their chosen subject. It can support a student who: needs to retake a subject, is absent through illness, is unwilling to attend

school, or wants to change subjects part-way through a term.'

Some students need more structure and mentoring to manage their 'independent' studies, and we have seen successful models where a school or a parent provides this additional support combined with NEC's enhanced service.

There will inevitably be other students who can only function within a set timetable and deadlines, and we would suggest that schools give careful consideration before enrolling these students. Our courses assume students speak English as their first language, or at a very high level. If you are unsure whether a course will be suitable for one of your students you can download a sample of the relevant course from our website **www.nec.ac.uk**.

One school's experience of NEC's service

Maranatha Christian School in Swindon has been using NEC's resources since September 2018 for the sciences and maths, as they have recently rolled-out GCSEs and A-levels. "It came out tops in content, delivery and fitting in with our aim for mastery learning," says the head, Grant Kauffman. "In addition, it gave a lot more helpful information than other suppliers who were considered and extensively researched. Teachers deliver a number of lessons from the front, but students can continue learning on their own. In exceptional cases such as when a staff member is absent due to illness or further training, students are quite able to continue without the immediate guidance or support from the specialist science or maths educator; this ensures that progress is not impeded. However, we can always revisit a section as a means to ensure that the concept has been mastered."

Maranatha was new to the GCSE curriculum, and the various science options provide an example of NEC's support: "Initially we did not fully understand how double science worked against the three individual sciences. We received good support and advice, so we could make an

informed decision in order to provide the best option for individual students. NEC's system is the perfect foil for our teaching methodology and endeavour for mastery learning with the progressive personalised system of instruction (PSI), pioneered by Fred Keller. As a result of partnering with NEC, the roll-out of our GCSEs has been a resounding success, with students consistently achieving outstanding marks on assessments," claims Grant Kauffman.

According to the senior science teacher at Maranatha, Mrs Mandy Gilchrist, "assessments ask higher level questions requiring analysis, application and recall. Practical experiments are beautifully laid out and can be done with easily sourceable apparatus and reagents. There is a very fast turnaround time with respect to marking and extensive feedback on assignments, which highlight expectations of GCSEs."

The headteacher concludes: "A very important factor is feedback on students' work. NEC's feedback was very good; the marking was strict but fair, and never more than 5% out, according to our moderation."

Highlights of the SSAT National Conference 2018



SSAT's National Conference, titled Pure Imagination, took place at the ICC, Birmingham, 5-6 December 2018. Introducing it, chief executive Sue Williamson said, "we hope this conference will make you think bigger, will make you think bolder, and it will challenge the status quo." Here are some of the main stage highlights, most of which have been covered more fully in our Sunday Supplement over the last couple of months.



Will Gompertz: To solve the world's problems, we should teach young people to think like artists

BBC arts editor and former Tate galleries director Will Gompertz explored how a broader approach to education can help address some of the issues facing a world increasingly focused on technology. To illustrate his theme, he took the Google driverless car: "How do you program the algorithm which drives that car? You have to make a decision because if there's an incident the car needs to know what to do. That algorithm is making the decision, not you.

"But here's the really big point. That liberty you've given away has been programmed into the algorithm by a human being. So, while we're saying we need lots of engineers and scientists, actually what we need is people who have been trained in philosophy and ethics – perhaps the most important two subjects in the curriculum over the coming years. Students will have to have a really good idea about how the brain works, about what the ethical situations are. So, when they come to program algorithms, they make decisions which are fair and reasonable.

"The digital revolution is going to lead to greater opportunities and greater need for creativity, because there is one thing we as human beings can do that no other species can do and no computer, however big, will ever be able to achieve: to be able to step out of time and place, to have an idea and realise it."



David Lammy: What will help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to do well at school?

Rt Hon David Lammy, former barrister and now MP for Tottenham, highlighted the issues in education for young people from working-class BME backgrounds (such as his own) and their families.

"When we're talking about working-class young people we need to be considering an extended day, breakfast clubs and things like that, as well as focusing hard on behaviour and an environment that's conducive to learning. There's an outstanding multi-ethnic community school in my constituency which has really cracked meeting those young kids in the environment from which they're coming, with popular music – the assemblies are developing into a sort of rock star show, children are celebrated and really bigged up. That formula works fantastically well in the context of Tottenham."

He favours the supplementary schools movement: "in ethnic minority traditions particularly, that extra work on a Saturday morning or after school does make a difference, because these are young people whose parents often find it hard to help, or where frankly some of the things going on in the home are not conducive to a learning environment. That was the case for me.

"I say this from experience as a black, working-class kid from Tottenham – my father left the family when I was 12, it wasn't easy for my mother raising five of us. But I had some fantastic teachers in Haringey and later in Peterborough, who really took an interest and were determined to lift up this black inner-city kid to get to where he needed to be. So, I say to kids from my kind of background that you'll always find adults who may not look like you or sound like you, but if you can get over your pride, they will help you. And the bottom line in school is about taking what's in your teacher's brain – for free."



Priya Lakhani: Imagine if robots ran our schools

CENTURY Tech Founder CEO Priya Lakhani OBE described the inspiration for her learning resource platform, which is based on artificial intelligence, neuroscience and learning science.

“While many aspects of teaching cannot be replaced – the brilliance of the individual teacher, and the human connection that is vital to inspiring children, for example – many of the more routine, data-related tasks can now be completed using artificial intelligence. That is why I started CENTURY Tech – a platform that allows teachers to focus on actually teaching. Teachers can put their own content onto the platform, or use its extensive existing library created by our expert teachers. Children then use it to learn subject matter and answer questions – the system tracks each user’s strengths, weaknesses and learning preferences. Through the tiny differences in timings of mouse movements or keyboard actions, for example, it can sense whether the user may have SEND.

“Our research with hundreds of UK schools shows this technology saves, on average, six hours per week.

“So it’s time to embrace technology – but it is not about a robot replacing us. It’s about using tools and technology that we use every single day on our phones, when we’re shopping, searching, or making friends on social networks, to free up teachers’ time.

“Other important features of CENTURY are the ability to give students audio/video feedback and to get children to record straight into their devices. That is really important, because it gives clear evidence of the reading the child is doing at home, for instance, as part of tracking their progress.”



Charlotte Church:
The school of the future?
Ask the students

A popular singer, an actor, a presenter, and a political activist, Charlotte Church had been spending the previous months researching education and creativity with the aim of setting up her own school.

“The journey I’m currently on has made me question my assumptions of what a good school can be: what good teaching is. The spark that ignited this process for me was the enormous response I had after announcing my intentions on Woman’s Hour this summer (2018), including from teachers, parents, architects, town planners, consultants, researchers and psychologists.

“The title of this conference, Pure Imagination, is perfect: why not question with the kids what the classroom should be, or whether a classroom is necessary at all?

“When learning is attached to an emotion, be it the joy and satisfaction of achievement, the fluttering excitement of discovery or the rich thrill of creation, the lessons stick. It’s a catastrophic waste of resources that we aren’t asking students what they want from their education. Can they not help us in designing a curriculum, in remodelling their learning environment? Think of the sense of ownership they’d feel. I understand that this idea of co-construction is something that many of your schools are currently looking into.”

She ended by suggesting audience members ask their pupils what they want from a school, what they think is important to learn and what they think education is for. “These questions, asked creatively, could return answers that tell us something we didn’t previously know.”



Save the date

SSAT National Conference 2019
Fighting for Deep Social Justice

4-5 December, Birmingham

Save the date for this year's conference which will explore what schools are doing to fight social justice and what we can do collectively to make this a reality for all.

ssatuk.co.uk/nc19

Student performance by Sir William Borlase's
Grammar School Boys Dance company

Three school leaders reflect on different aspects of capital

Social capital

Andrew Morrish, Chief Executive, Victoria Academies, said: “We need as leaders to take back control, and most importantly, to take an inside-out approach – where everything that we do in our schools is embedded in action research that begins within our classrooms and permeates to the outside, into our local communities. Then we won't have to rely on people from the outside telling us what we have to do.

“It is most important, I believe, to penetrate deeply into the communities that surround our schools. Essentially, it's the sum of all the resources that our parents and families have access to that allow them to make connections within their community, to get a sense of belonging and self-worth. As you know, particularly in deprived areas, many of our families that come from all four corners of the world have no sense of their belonging, their friendship groups are simply the person that they live with in their house. By giving these parents social capital, they become less disadvantaged. Imagine what we could do as teachers if our families came into our schools and didn't simply participate in activities, things like parents' evenings, school productions, sports days, assemblies, but actively engaged on a really deep and meaningful intrinsic level. Imagine what we could do. Most importantly, I think social capital would allow these parents to get a foot on the social ladder.”

Cultural capital

Caroline Derbyshire, CEO of Saffron Academy Trust, discussed Tom Sherrington's metaphor of the learning rainforest – “an almost magical place dripping with possibilities, teeming with life. It's a rich and diverse place and it is self-perpetuating. He contrasts that with the characteristics of a plantation. Schools that are rainforests grow fantastic teachers, have a diverse and inspiring curriculum, have wonderful outcomes and are self-

sustaining. Plantation schools, however, (and you'll know a few of them) think that there is only one way to do anything. They're driven by what can be examined or what can be inspected. Hence, their practice tends to be standardised and uniform and their curriculum somewhat limited.

“Subject enrichment is built into our offer, we teach beyond the syllabus. The extracurricular offer is really broad. Saffron Hall is the living symbol of how that philosophy sits at the heart of our school. Built five years ago thanks to a gift from a local philanthropist, it's a concert hall that can hold 740 people: all our students get the opportunity to work with professional dancers, classical and jazz musicians, and to attend concerts featuring the likes of Courtney Pine, Nicola Benedetti and the London Symphony Orchestra. We believe that that cultural capital is a birthright.

“As a rainforest, we see children flourish and teachers grow and develop. Rainforests schools are, I think, the lungs of our education system.”

Creative capital

David Priestley, executive headteacher, Greenfield Community College: “Do the decisions that we make as leaders really allow our young people to develop fully their potential as confident, self-led learners? Could we do more to create the right opportunities, circumstances and conditions for our students to thrive?

“In May 2017, Ofsted judged Greenfield Community College to require improvement. I'm sure many of you'd be aware that this can provide some additional pressures to do the right thing. At Greenfield, we keep asking ourselves, do the decisions we make allow our young people to develop fully? How do we navigate the pressures, judgments, and national performance agenda to ensure that we can best

enable our young people? To achieve that, we have been exploring three priorities:

- Maintaining a self-improving culture of learning across our organisation
- Providing the right curriculum that will promote a strong student voice and a can-do attitude
- Creating an outstanding learning experience for each and every one of our students.”

“After a period of doing what was expected of us as an RI school, we reviewed our approach and started to do more of what we believe to be the right thing for our students. If we want to enable young people to engage in learning, they need to feel a deep sense of belonging and self-worth.

“So, last year our students led a campaign across our school community, ‘from the ordinary to the extraordinary’. We hosted a theatre residency, facilitated joint student leader and staff training and published a personal development book that every member of our school community received. But most of all, our student leaders opened up a dialogue about how we can be the best we can be as individuals and as a school. This led to some decisions including a new house system across both sites – facilitated by the students – and the regrouping and movement of students and teachers to realise the best opportunities on both of our sites.”

Student journalists’ views on the SSAT conference

A number of year 10 students attended the conference. Here are some of the evaluations from students at Sir Christopher Hatton Academy, collated by their teacher Laura Murphy.

Erin Cooper: what needs to change in order to progress

I felt privileged to be given such an eye-opening opportunity, and I truly believe that other students would benefit in confidence and communication skills, as well as a better knowledge on politics and our society by attending events like these.

Tahmima Islam: not every person learns the same way

Imagine if it didn't matter where you came from: Rt Hon David Lammy, MP. If there was one thing to take from this session, it was that “not every young person learns the same way”.

Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day: Pennyman Primary Academy’s session emphasised having an effective relationship of trust with parents.

Just Like Us: Rainbow Ribbon Campaign highlighted the importance of empowering LGBT+ young people.

Not every young person learns the same way: this session discussed how to depolarise debates, so conflicts are avoided.

Football VS the gender gap: This session focused on working with boys who were disengaged with school but passionate about football.

Kian Patel: the different ways in which schools, students and teachers can improve

The three main talks which resonated with me were about: football in schools, the future of education and the struggles of students.

Clive Agiam: daunting at first, but one of my best school trips

The project called Lexonik is an innovative literacy programme that helps people (age nine to adulthood) that have difficulty with literacy and vocabulary skills to learn. A programme like this would be very beneficial for the people in my year that are having trouble when it comes to vocab, reading or when they come across a complex word or definition.



Claire Preston:
Eradicating preventable illiteracy

"We all know that if we want our students to develop into citizens who are confident, creative, innovative, imaginative, and resilient citizens, we must give them the skills that they need to develop, and the strategies to unlock the curriculum," said Lexonik's chief executive in introducing her presentation. Like long-term partners SSAT, her organisation has "an unwavering belief that no student should be locked out of the curriculum because of preventable illiteracy."

"As such, literacy is the domain of every teacher and should be the priority of every school leader. It's a matter of social justice." She explained that Lexonik's campaign to eradicate preventable illiteracy "means not just decoding words, but genuinely understanding. It's not just an issue which is affecting our weaker students, although this is a key group. Our campaign is to work with you to ensure that by the end of key stage 3, no student cannot access the curriculum due to preventable illiteracy."

Vanessa, one of the teachers who spoke about their experience of using the Lexonik programme in class, said the process is helpful because it involves "breaking down the words, not just memorising the spellings but knowing exactly what they mean. And once they learn the connectives of the different words and what they mean, students can be able to understand words that they wouldn't have come across before."

Jenny Appleton, head of Tiber Alternative Provision with 11 schools spanning London, Cambridgeshire and the northwest of England, has made extensive use of Lexonik. "This is a literacy programme that actually works," she said. "The model of implementation we have developed together has been so successful that reading ages across the participating alternative provision schools have increased by an average of 30 months after just one term of intervention."



Amanda Spielman:
Dispelling some myths about inspection

Amanda Spielman's presentation encouraged delegates to use their informed, professional judgements in the interests of students. Along with the much-publicised consultation about the new framework due to take effect from this September, the inspectorate's focus is "on having a really professional dialogue about the substance of education. That I hope will really help make people feel that those are the right conversations to be having."

"I want to make sure not that we disregard outcomes, but that we're really looking at the bigger picture, with reported numbers in their context, in their proper place, not taking them as a thing in isolation."

The inspectorate insists that it is not seeking to enforce particular approaches to curriculum. "The challenge for us has been developing criteria that are broad enough to genuinely encompass the full range of ways of building quality [in curriculum] while at the same time to weed out the stuff that really isn't giving children what they need. That's what we've been testing in the 40-odd pilots we have done about the quality of education. And what's coming back from that so far is very encouraging. We saw curricula that started with very different philosophical underpinnings, but nevertheless achieved their goal. So, what we're doing is making sure that we set criteria that allow for that range."

In summary, she said, "It's about helping us all to have the right conversations that are really about education."

How SSAT can support your school improvement journey

We can help you identify focus areas and access the right tools, advice, resources and programmes for improvement. Our education team has expertise in primary, secondary, post-16 and special education, and we offer school improvement consultancy and support that can be delivered flexibly to suit your requirements.

Examples of our professional development and school improvement support include:

- ▶ **Coaching**
Tailored one-to-one support and bespoke group training
- ▶ **Improving whole school attendance and punctuality**
Identify new approaches to improve attendance and punctuality rates
- ▶ **School perception surveys**
Analyse how staff, learners and parents feel about your school
- ▶ **Leaders for the Future**
Develop the leadership skills, knowledge and mindsets of teachers showing leadership potential
- ▶ **Peer Review**
Work with other school leaders to self-evaluate and plan for further improvement
- ▶ **Department for Education's National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML) Modules**
Become an accredited delivery partner and offer this middle leadership training across your school and networks
- ▶ **Lead Practitioner Accreditation**
Empower and recognise your staff to improve whole-school teaching and learning
- ▶ **Embedding Formative Assessment Programme**
Improve teacher practice and help your students make two months' extra progress

VISIT [SSATUK.CO.UK/CPD](https://ssatuk.co.uk/cpd) TO SEE THE FULL RANGE OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE.



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