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In this issue...



Sharing a love of reading

Pupils from Westholme School, Lancashire, have been given a presentation from TV and radio presenter, Dermot O'Leary, who visited the school to talk about his love of reading and his new children's book – Wings of Glory.

Dermot spoke to pupils about the characters from his book and shared pictures from his own childhood to illustrate the important moments that shaped his love of reading and the inspirations behind his new novel.

Tales of his younger years included one about his father, who brought home a computer which Dermot would use to write stories on, then sell the stories to neighbours for 5p each.

Dermot said of his new book: "I wanted to teach children about history but in an entertaining way. I love history and animals and wanted to combine the two.

"In 2015 I had the good fortune of making a documentary about the Battle of Britain and I met former RAF Wing Commander pilot, Tom Neil, who was called up at age 19 to fly. He left such an impression on me that I based one of the characters in the book on Tom."

During his visit to the school, Dermot also shared his writing advice with the children. He said: "Don't just think writing is for the classroom. Write at home too. And, if you have a good idea, make sure to write it down so you remember it and you then can come back to it and add to that idea."

Dermot concluded with an excerpt from his book with the children then invited to partake in a draw-along activity where Dermot's book illustrator, Claire Powell, gave a step-by-step guide via video of how to draw the book's leading character, Linus.

Pictured: Dermot O'Leary with pupils and Prep Deputy Head, Mrs Judith Dixon, Interim Principal, Mr Mark Upton, and Acting Head of Prep, Mrs Carla Hornby

Cover background

Embracing the game

Rossall School, Lancashire has entered into a partnership with Man City. Find out more about this and a round-up of all other sporting news in our feature section on pages 41 to 44.

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Is Your School Mentioned?

Schools featured in this issue include:

Abingdon School; Abingdon Prep School; ACS International School, Hillingdon; Ashville College; Bolton School Boys' Division; Bolton School Girls' Division; Bradford Grammar Junior School; Brentwood School; Cranleigh School; Dame Bradbury's Junior School; Downe House; Ellesmere College; Felsted School; Forres Sandle Manor School; George Heriot's School; Giggleswick School; Gordonstoun; Haberdashers' Monmouth School; Highfields Independent School and Day Nursery; Jersey College for Girls; King's High School, Warwick; Leighton Park School; Leweston School; The Leys School; Longridge Towers School; Loughborough Grammar School; Lucton School; Repton School; RGS Worcester; Rossall School; Royal Hospital School; Shebbear College; Solihull School; St Albans High School for Girls (STAHS); STAHS Prep; St Margaret's School, Hertfordshire; St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen; St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh; Stephen Perse Cambridge Senior School; Stonyhurst College; Stormont School; Surbiton High School; Taunton School; Terrington Hall; Truro Prep School; Westhouse School; Westminster School; Westminster Under School; Woodbridge School

'Represent the badge'

In an ever-changing world how can schools maintain standards of behaviour? Depute: Standards and Ethos at George Heriot's School, Edinburgh, Matthew Mallinson, discusses his aim for pupils to not see teachers as just teachers but as human beings and how using the concept of teamwork has created positive results in behaviour management.



Schools are facing an uncertain political and social landscape, and we are not completely aware what the future will hold. However, as we move with the times it is important to remember some strong foundations that we can all implement as communities, to ensure we maintain the high standards we come to expect of young people at school.

From a young age, I was brought up learning to respect people and treat everyone as a human being. I was encouraged to develop 'soft skills' and always be willing to listen and engage in conversation. As I sit here now, as a Deputy Head at George Heriot's, I can see the importance of these skills, not least because I work on them each day with the young people at the school.

The behavioural expectations in the Senior School are built on these foundations. They are clear and rely upon respect and consistency in application.

My aim is for all pupils at this school to see us not just as teachers, but as human beings. This might sound odd, but I remember bumping into a pupil at the local supermarket. Not only was the pupil surprised, but I would go as far as to say they were shocked that I had breached the walls of Heriot's. That said, once

they had got over the initial horror, I was delighted at their ability to engage in conversation and wish me a pleasant day. This made me consider how pupils view teachers and prompted me to think about how I could use the concept of teamwork to create positive results in behaviour management.

In a recent talk to all pupils, I spoke about being part of the same community. I often look at sports teams and reflect on my previous life, as a Director of Sport, and see the value and power of working as a team. Every day we expect the pupils to wear the school badge; this should be done with pride. Interestingly, I noticed that the expectation is upon the pupils to display their allegiance to the team, but we, as teachers, don't. How can we consider ourselves part of the 'team' if we don't have the same pride in the badge we wear. One of my first actions when becoming a Senior Leader was to present all colleagues with a 'Heriot's' pin badge. The impact on our community working together has been overwhelmingly positive.

However, we also set clear and firm boundaries. We have never allowed mobile phones to be switched on when on campus (unless directed by a member of staff). There are clear sanctions, our behavioural

expectations are very high, and the pupils are very aware of our standards. Pupils know what sanction they will be receiving before it is actioned. I am a strong believer in taking responsibility for actions, and this is a message I send regularly and clearly to all pupils. We all make mistakes, but it is how we behave after these mistakes which is vitally important and often makes the difference. These are crucially important conversations and young people must be in an environment where they feel they are supported. They may ultimately face a sanction, but the sanction is fair and agreed upon. Interestingly, I have had some conversations with pupils where I have given them a more lenient sanction than they expected. 'Why?' I can hear many people ask. Well, I like to reward honesty. If a young person is willing to accept all responsibility for their actions and reflect on what they have done wrong, they should be rewarded and praised for this.

As a school, of course we have behaviour management issues. Young people will make mistakes. However, they must feel confident to take responsibility for their actions and be willing to discuss these. I am often delighted when I have pupils waiting outside my office wanting to reflect and

discuss what has happened. They understand my philosophy and are aware honesty is something which carries significant weight.

To achieve this success, you need an excellent team of colleagues. It is vitally important all colleagues buy into the culture and work together and liaise over behaviour management issues. Staff must feel they have a voice and an opportunity to implement change or raise concerns. I spend large amounts of my day speaking and listening to colleagues to understand their views and use these to implement positive change.

Young people also appreciate having a voice and as a gold standard Right's Respecting School they know this, but they are aware of when and how this comes into play. For example, it was this voice through our Senior School Pupil Council which has led us to introduce a gender-neutral uniform.

I am in no doubt, when dealing with over 1000 teenagers daily, there will be some challenging times ahead. However, each year there are fewer. I believe this is due to the environment created, our focus on consistency, our ethos of respect, and in representing the badge we all share with pride.

Space rocks



Pupils from Bradford Grammar Junior School, West Yorkshire, had a once in a lifetime chance to get their hands on rare samples of moon rocks and meteorites during a series of science lessons.

During a week-long interactive experience of astronomy, the youngsters were given the opportunity to touch a 1.2 billion-year-old piece of Mars rock

and a 4.3 billion-year-old nickel meteorite, the latter of which had fallen to Earth from space. The lunar samples were collected in the late 1960s and early 1970s during some of NASA's first manned space missions to the Moon.

The rare samples were provided free of charge by the UK's Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), which

provides educational packs in a bid to inspire young people to get involved in science and complement classroom studies.

During the manned space missions to the moon, a staggering 382kg of material was brought back to Earth – mostly for use by scientists, but small quantities were used to develop educational packs.

The power of partnering with local specialist schools

Cross-sector partnership projects that seek to address a specific social issue or gap in provision can have transformative outcomes for all. Head at King's High School Warwick, Stephen Burley, discusses the positive partnerships the school has with their local specialist school, and how they are looking to create a national network of schools to provide life-changing experiences through the school holidays.



Stephen Burley

The strength and depth of the partnership work between independent and state sectors is incredibly impressive. At this year's launch of the ISC's Celebrating Partnerships Report at the House of Lords, it was a huge privilege to talk to colleagues about the impact of mutually-beneficial partnership initiatives which stood out with such clear vision, shared goals and powerful outcomes.

The sheer range of the types of partnership work is remarkable: some schools work together on academic partnerships, either inspiring more able students or those who need additional support, or on specific areas such as STEM or language learning, whilst others focus on the creative and performing arts, university and careers preparation, or areas such as sport, mental health and teacher development.

Over the years, I've been involved in a range of cross-sector partnerships, but when I reflect on the most successful – in terms of impact and outcomes – I find myself thinking about those partnership projects that seek to address a specific social issue or a particular gap in provision. This enables a more focused approach, with a sharper sense of aims and outcomes.

In particular, I am a huge advocate of the power of partnering with your local specialist school and I am keen to develop a network of schools who have done this in order to share experiences and perspectives, to share good practice and to encourage schools around the UK to build this type of partnership. The rewards are immense in terms of high-impact, transformative outcomes and experiences for everyone involved.

King's High School and Evergreen School, a broad-spectrum specialist school with around 300 pupils, have worked together, within a

much broader partnership project at Warwick Schools Foundation, for over two years. The partnership began, in part, out of curiosity: as the father of a son with complex disabilities and care needs who attends a specialist school, I undoubtedly had a firm sense of how this type of partnership could impact positively on the vulnerable young children at Evergreen, whilst also providing transformative opportunities for my own students at King's High.

We started broadly – getting to know key staff, building relationships, and exploring areas of potential collaboration. Our Friday Afternoon Activities Programme was the obvious place to begin and groups of our students went to Evergreen each week to support classes, to run activities and to help out more generally. Evergreen was able to use our site for staff training and overnight camps as well as holding their annual production in our theatre. We benefitted enormously from experts from Evergreen running CPD sessions on SEND and autism for our staff, and giving talks to students on careers in specialist education.

From these beginnings, our vision began to sharpen and our planning focused on how to address a much overlooked social need: providing support and opportunities for young disabled children during the school holidays. Last year, the disability charity, Contact, conducted a survey that found that nine out of ten families have been unable to find a suitable holiday club or activity for their disabled child, with families desperate for opportunities through the long summer holiday. Almost 80% of parents felt stressed and anxious due to lack of holiday clubs, with over a third giving up work because of a lack of suitable childcare.

From my experiences with my son, I knew only too well of these issues and I was particularly keen to work with Evergreen to explore possible solutions. We both wanted to provide life-enhancing experiences during school holidays for the children at Evergreen. Firstly, our Foundation's well-established Holiday Action Programme, which runs through every school holiday for local children, was enhanced to offer 15 weekly places to children from Evergreen, with a combination of Evergreen staff and King's High students supporting swimming classes, go-karting, craft and other activities.

However, children with more profound disabilities were not able to access this provision and we wanted to address this urgently. We therefore partnered with Let's Play, a disability playgroup in Oxfordshire, to launch a new and fully-inclusive holiday playgroup based at Evergreen School, staffed by students from King's High and Warwick School, alongside experts from Let's Play and Evergreen.

Due to the staff ratios required to support children with complex needs, the costs are inevitably high, but we were very fortunate in being able to draw on the support of The King Henry VIII Trust, one of our ancient Warwick charities. Before joining the programme, our students undergo thorough training via our bespoke in-house course which covers modules on autism, safeguarding, first aid and activity planning.

The impact of the project is very powerful. Nick Evans, Executive Head at Evergreen School, writes: "The partnership to enable holiday provision for our children and young people has been nothing short of life changing. Suitable, affordable and sustainable holiday provision for children and young people

with SEND has been limited for many years, so to be in a position where we can now offer accessible activities, in familiar settings and during the school holidays, is transformational. Not only do our families now have some much-needed respite, but pupils are able to have some brilliant experiences with their friends in the holidays, with the right level of support."

The parent perspectives were very clear: one Evergreen parent wrote, "there are no clubs for our children in the holidays and this has a massive impact on us and our children." Another pleaded, "Please do more days; there is nothing for our children. Why shouldn't they get the same chances?"

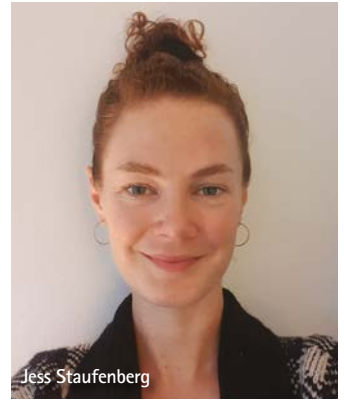
We are excited for the future of this project and aspire, in time, to offer provision through every school holiday so that children with additional needs can have the same opportunities as their peers.

We would also love to work with other independent schools to create a national network of schools working closely in partnership with their local special school to provide life-changing experiences through the school holidays. By working together as a sector, we can have a tremendously positive impact on the lives of families in our communities who are in desperate need for support and provision for their children. Independent school partnership work takes many forms and its strength is its diversity; but, by partnering successfully with your local special school the impact is incredibly high and the benefits for the children at both schools are palpably clear.

If you would like to know more about our work. Get in touch with me s.burley@kingshighwarwick.co.uk

Labour's private school tax plan: The numbers

With numbers flying around everywhere about Labour's VAT plan what can most accurately be said about the policy? Last month the Private Education Policy Forum (PEPF) held an event to take a closer look. Co-founder of the PEPF, Jess Staufenberg, reviews the discussion.



Amid the many shouty headlines arguing for and against Labour's VAT policy, we thought the more sanguine members of society might appreciate a nerdier, longer look at the numbers.

So we at Private Education Policy Forum were very grateful when the authors of two reports on the policy gamely agreed to a long evening chatting tax, with an invested audience waiting in the wings to ask questions.

Our aim was to get to the bottom of what can be most accurately said about the policy. Was Luke Sibieta of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) right to confirm Labour's estimate of around £1.5 billion in generated tax revenue? Or was EDSK thinktank director Tom Richmond correct in suggesting the policy could raise only a few millions if it forces enough private school parents to move into the state sector?

First, a few learning points for those of you sat at the back. Private schools, once VAT-taxable, can also claim VAT back, so the net rate of VAT on school fees would actually be around 15 per cent rather than 20 per cent.

Having established this, it was the areas on which the two researchers agreed that proved particularly interesting. Richmond accepted that Sibieta's calculation is probably the most accurate we have available to us and conceded that his own original rough prediction – that the policy could be hundreds of millions pounds less than expected – seems to be less certain given the greater data examined by the IFS. Nevertheless, we agreed we were grateful to Richmond for being

the first to shake the policy out by the pockets and guess what might come out under different scenarios.

Likewise, Sibieta agreed with Richmond that wealthier parents could avoid VAT by paying upfront, which Labour would find very difficult to prevent (as we have seen in the news recently). This concession supported Richmond's wider point that VAT is a very complex tax and that adding it to private school fees could be a genuine practical and legal challenge. Richmond seemed to suggest it is so complex, that other means will be much more effective at raising cash for the cash-strapped Treasury.

The biggest takeaway for everyone who tuned in was, I think, the impact on some SEND pupils. We know that state schools have seen real-terms funding cuts under Conservative governments since 2010, and that as a result children have been leaving the mainstream school system for alternative provision and special educational needs schools. But the government hasn't ensured enough places are available. Some of these children now in private schools could lose their school places if their school increases fees, something our audience felt very worried about.

So Labour has promised that parents paying for children with a formal Education Health and Care Plan will be exempt from the tax – but as Richmond pointed out, the incentive to secure one will be enormous as a consequence. We already know that more vocal, well-resourced parents threatening tribunal are much more likely to get an EHCP than under-resourced parents who don't. And what

about those children in the less "severe" but important category of 'SEN support'?

It's also unclear whether you can tax the same product differently depending on who is buying it, Richmond noted. That will be a key question for Labour.

The other elephant in the room for this conversation is the fact that better-funded state schools and councils would stop many of these questions being a problem. It's a catch-22 – an under-funded state sector makes some parents who can afford it decide to go private (sidestepping the fact that many state schools provide brilliant SEND provision), and so it seems especially unfair when the private school sector gets a tax giveaway. In turn, some parents are worried about returning to an underfunded state sector.

More broadly, Sibieta says that the effects of fee rises on attendance levels look to be quite small, according to the little research available. Private school fees have increased on average by 55 per cent since 2003-4, but the proportion of pupils in private schools has nevertheless remained the same. As such, his estimation is that 'three to seven per cent' of pupils (remember, this isn't percentage points) may leave the sector – but with the caveat that "it's entirely possible it may be larger", but not significantly larger.

It does seem likely there will be case studies where a large influx of pupils into the state sector will put pressure on a particular locality, says Richmond – but Sibieta is sceptical, given how much fees have already risen in private schools in the past 40 years, that the state

school sector will be significantly impacted, or not quickly adjust.

But here we come to something PEPF thinks about a lot. Can the country aid private schools to convert to academies, where places are needed?

Liverpool College, a former HMC school, William Hulme's Grammar School in Manchester, Colston's Girls' School in Bristol, and Birkenhead High School and The Belvedere School in Merseyside, are just a handful who have made the move – and they have seemingly never looked back. If done expertly, such a move would keep places and familiarity for their current pupils, which they absolutely deserve, and open up a hopefully good school to all children – which one can argue they absolutely deserve, too.

In the end, regardless of the numbers, whether or not you think it is right for private school fees to have VAT applied is a matter of opinion – however you dress it up. Being researchers, neither Sibieta nor Richmond gave theirs.

But for each of us it probably hangs on whether you think paying for a different education to one that is cost-free has the right to be free of tax. Or whether you think being VAT-exempt is the equivalent of a tax giveaway – a public subsidy handed out by Jeremy Hunt to a private service – despite the public being told their schools and hospitals and care homes can't receive more money because the nation's coffers are simply too empty.

Either way, let's hope Labour really do their homework with this one.

Watch the event here: <https://www.pepf.co.uk/events/labours-private-school-tax-plan-the-numbers>



VAT: Understanding individual context

Giggleswick School, North Yorkshire, has taken the decision not to pass on the additional cost of VAT to its families. Headmaster, Sam Hart, explains why the school is taking such a bold stance against VAT on fees and how they are planning for this to work for them in practice.



Sam Hart

With the upcoming election, this is undoubtedly one of the most challenging times that the independent sector has faced. In response to the looming possibility of VAT being added to independent school fees, Giggleswick School has taken a proactive decision by committing to not pass on this additional cost to our valued families. This sets a precedent within the sector as a whole, with only one other school (at the time of publication) who has made the same commitment to their current and future families.

As the Headmaster of Giggleswick School, I am naturally invested in ensuring the well-being of the whole school community, the constituent elements being our pupils, parents and staff. It is my responsibility to respond to all future threats which could have significant impact on our community. By this measure it was imperative for our Board and Senior Leadership Team to thoroughly assess the potential impact of VAT and take decisive action to mitigate any adverse effects.

At the centre of our decision was the focus on protecting our current and future families by alleviating the financial burden of VAT. In doing so we have enabled our families to plan for the future with confidence and ensure that no pupil is forced to compromise their education due to unforeseen financial constraint. The decision to absorb VAT costs was not taken lightly. We understand the broader implications of this move; however, every school has a different context against which complex decisions must be made. Our context is unique in its own way: our rural location, understanding of our parent body, and our proximity to strong state maintained schools, resource base etc. were all factors that had to be considered. Careful analysis of the risk against our

context meant it was vital we took a rigorous and proactive approach, which could be implemented in a measured and timely manner. Each school must consider their own situation and weigh up the advantages and risks of passing VAT to their families, if they want to ensure the survival of their school.

The decision to absorb VAT has required considered adjustments aimed at preserving the quality and breadth of education at our school. The most notable change for pupils involves reducing the school working day by forty-five minutes. This shift allows for the optimisation of staff resource allocation, and enables a more flexible learning environment for our pupils. Inevitably, we have also had to examine our staff structures to ensure we operate as efficiently as possible, and this has unfortunately meant that we had to take the difficult decision to restructure our current staffing model. Furthermore, we have also had to refine our approach towards remission. Collectively, these measures allow us to meet our commitment not to pass on the additional cost of VAT on schools to our current and future parent body.

Even though this will streamline our overall structure, it is important to note that these adjustments are meticulously designed to ensure that educational standards remain uncompromised. Through these measures, we are fostering a leaner, more agile institution while effectively managing resources and creating efficiencies that ultimately benefit our school community.

Critics may question the feasibility of our decision and raise concerns about the sustainability of our operations. However, rest assured we have undertaken a thorough evaluation of our resources and

capabilities, and the potential impact of any policy change. In making this determination, we have consistently modelled against the worst case scenario, which would be the application of VAT to the totality of school fees. While adjustments may be necessary, we are convinced by the appropriateness of our strategic choice and confident that we can maintain the quality of education that our families have come to expect from Giggleswick School.

Finally, by providing clarity and stability in our fee structure, we aim to ease the burden on our families and ensure that every

child has the opportunity to continue to receive the benefits of a Giggleswick education. It is important to acknowledge that our decision may not align with the choices made by all independent schools. Each school's response is dependent on their individual context and in our situation, this was the most prudent response. As Schools in the Independent Sector, we are all working towards the same goal; to ensure our institutions continue to thrive. I am proud of the Giggleswick community and hope that we stand as an example to other schools within the sector.

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Rising school fees and the threat of VAT – what are parents thinking?

According to a recent report rising school fees are forcing parents to take out loans, turn to the bank of mum and dad, and even move house to continue to keep their children in private education. Financial planning specialist, Mike Stimpson, outlines some of the research findings and considers what this and the threat of VAT might mean to schools.



Mike Stimpson

ISC Census figures show that private school fees have risen steadily over recent years. Following a rise of 6% from 2022 to 2023, the average cost of sending a child to a private day school in the UK is now £5,552 per term – that's £16,656 a year. At a private boarding school, the average day fee is £7,297 a term, while boarders pay an average of £13,002 a term.

With Labour promising to add VAT to school fees if they win the next election – which according to the latest polls is a strong possibility – the cost of private education is set to soar by at least 20%. And with speculation that school fees themselves will also rise, the increase in the cost of sending a child to private school is estimated to be anything between 20% and 30% over the next year.

The VAT rise alone would put the average day school fee up from £16,656 a year to £19,987. At boarding schools, day fees would increase from £21,891 to £26,269 while the average boarding fee would rise from £39,006 a year to a staggering £46,807. Assuming the fees rise at the same rate as they did last year of 6%, the cost goes up a further £1,000 a year for a day-school pupil and more than £2,000 for a boarder, bringing it close to £50,000 a year.

And while many people may think wealthier parents of private school children can afford these rises, the reality is that many are already

struggling to cover the increase in fees over the past 12 months and further increases will simply mean private education is no longer affordable for them.

Fees skyrocketing

In fact, according to our latest Saltus Wealth Index Report*, seven in ten parents with children either already at private school, or due to start, say rising school fees will impact their choices around private school education for their children.

Almost a third of those we asked said they will no longer be able to give their children a private education if fees rise any further than current levels. One in five will have to move their children out of their current private school and into state school, while 6% say they will no longer be able to afford to send their pre-school children into private school as planned. Almost half of these parents say that without the option of private school, they would consider moving house in order to be in a better catchment area for a good state school.

For others, the price rises will not force them to pull their children out of their independent school but will push them into taking drastic measures to ensure they can continue to cover the cost of their private education. For example, our survey suggests as many as a quarter of parents will have to borrow money to continue to afford rising school fees, either from friends and family (9%), via

a bank loan (11%) or by extending their mortgage (5%). Almost one in ten (9%) say they could end up uprooting the whole family because they could be forced to move house in order to keep their children in private education, either to enable their boarding children to become day pupils, or to move them to a more affordable private school.

Additional impact of VAT

And this is all before you add the extra cost of VAT. According to our data, if Labour do win the next election and stay true to their promise of adding VAT to school fees, the extra cost would cause issues for the vast majority.

When asked what they would do if a future government started charging VAT on private school fees, just one in four said they would be unaffected.

Half said they would be able to keep their children in private education if VAT was added but would have to make changes – either moving them from boarding to becoming a day pupil or removing them from their current school and enrolling them in a less expensive one. The rest (26%) said they would be forced to remove their child from the private sector completely and instead send them to state school if VAT was added, the knock-on effects of which could be significant for education across the country.

According to the Independent

Schools Council, currently around 620,000 children are educated in the private school sector in the UK – that's 5.9% of school age children. Our data suggests that 26% of these children could be removed from the independent system and put into state schools, meaning that there could immediately be an extra 161,200 children needing places in already stretched state schools. Although our report reveals that many families are willing to move house in order to be in a better catchment area for good state schools, this will also have a knock-on impact on families planning to send their children to popular state schools, as other families join the competition for places.

If school fees themselves increase too, there will potentially be a further tranche of children having to leave their private school and join the state system along with a huge number of pre-school children, who were due to start their education at a private school, but whose parents have now been priced out.

Ultimately, if too many children are forced to leave the private system, schools themselves may face struggles to remain open, suggesting that the impacts of added VAT are potentially far wider reaching than it first appears.

About Saltus Wealth Index Report

- The survey included 2,000 UK respondents (aged 18+) who have £250k+ of investable assets.
 - Research was conducted by Censuswide (Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society, based on the ESOMAR principles).
 - This research was carried out online in December 2023.
- https://www.saltus.co.uk/wealth-index/reports/saltus-wealth-index-january-2024?utm_source=publication&utm_medium=pr&utm_campaign=wealth-index

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Co-education milestone

For the first time in its almost 500-year history, Westminster and Westminster Under School, London, have announced that as of 2026 they will be going co-educational with the introduction of girls into all years, and a new pre-prep. But what has been the drive for this move? Head of Westminster School, Dr Gary Savage, explains and takes a look at what has been involved in prepping for this next step.



Dr Gary Savage

As a historian by training and teaching, I naturally love the past; and I get probably more than my fair share of it here at Westminster – an ancient school with deep links to the history of London and the nation. Thanks to our neighbours in the Abbey, Parliament, Supreme Court, South Bank and West End, it is a richly stimulating and inspiring place to live and learn. It is indeed a privilege.

Leading a historic school, largely within a UNESCO World Heritage Site, can foster a sense of caution when contemplating major change. It is human nature to think that to venture 'change' is to risk 'breaking', and to conclude that it might be better sticking with the none-too-shabby status quo.

My, that would be a mistake. We are doing what many great schools, with their long, rich histories, have done time and again over the centuries: adapting to meet the specific challenges and mores of the age so that the school remains vital and relevant, as well as true to its mission and values.

The result of this process of continual change here at Westminster is an amazing school with great and sometimes quirky traditions alongside a deeply progressive attitude to education. Against a backdrop of the most up-to-date approaches to learning, teaching and pastoral care, our scholars play a key role in coronation services, pupils continue to sing Latin Prayers, and once a year the most daring fight over a pancake reinforced with horsehair which has been tossed over an iron bar high above our main School Hall. (Though admittedly for this, The Pancake Greaze, we do now put mats on the floor to help avoid injury: we're not such traditionalists that we'll ignore common sense health and safety.)

I suppose what I'm saying is that if you approach change – even major change – without the fear of losing sight of who and what you are, but with the conviction that this can be strengthened through the process of timely, well-managed change, then it can be done. That is certainly what we have sought to do here at Westminster, with our recent announcement about going fully co-educational in the next few years.

I recognise that some people might think we are going fully co-ed because of a lack of suitable applicants, or just to make money, simply dressing this up in the beguiling verbiage of modernisation. This is not true. The drive for co-education at Westminster is actually a very simple one: we think it is the right thing for this School and for the many generations of Westminsters to come. Of course, girls have been an integral part of the school in the Sixth Form for over half a century, so what we are doing now feels like the completion of a project started 50 years ago.

Ultimately, we want to offer the best possible liberal education to any child with the intellectual curiosity, appetite and ability to flourish here – and full co-education brings us closer to that goal.

In all of this, while our admissions, aspects of the co-curriculum and facilities will change, none of our ethos, vision or value will; on the contrary, they will be reinforced. This seems to me a good test for whether you are on a true course. So too is the reaction of your community, which here has truly welcomed our announcement that we would introduce full co-education, as well as three new co-educational pre-prep years at Westminster Under School, our currently 7-13 boys' prep school, from 2026/2028.

Well-considered reasons for change rooted in a commitment to access and inclusion can only get you so far, of course. To turn conviction into reality, the preparatory work has to be detailed and painstaking, and in many ways we have only just crossed the starting line.

There has been lots of strategic thinking, market and sector analysis, and research into current and future demand. Discussions of finance have played their part, not because revenue was a driver for this change, but because that change needs to be underpinned by a plan to ensure the financial sustainability of the charity in the longer term.

All of this has been overseen by some additional organisational structures. We have created a new co-ed oversight group (management) and a co-ed steering group (governance), as well as various working groups to look at the curriculum, co-curriculum, boarding, estates, admissions and marketing. We have a new head of expansion at the Under School, a new co-education project director, and a head of girls' sport. To ensure the success of the pre-prep, we have also invested in a new building for the Under School; and at Westminster School we have acquired a new building to convert into a performing arts centre for girls, boys and the local community.

We have given ourselves enough time for the shift to full co-education to ensure that all of this work can be done alongside continuing to give a full and thorough focus on the pupils in our care right now, whose health, wellbeing and success remain our number one priority. They too will benefit from some of the 'quick wins' emerging from master planning, investment, and the work of the working parties. Truly, this is

a transformational project not just for the longer term, but for now, too.

The one thing our change is not, is any sort of commentary on the age-old chestnut of whether single-sex or co-ed is 'better' – a question I've always regarded as non-sensical. Both approaches work not for all children, but for specific children: what suits one girl or boy might not suit another. Parents must choose from the options available. At Westminster, in the near future, that option will be co-educational. For us, there was never a discussion of ideology around any decision-making table. It seemed implicit in our thinking that we are not an excellent school because we have been a chiefly single-sex school, nor that we would somehow become a better school due to the shift to full co-education, but that we have been excellent and will continue to be so because we are Westminster. I hope this doesn't sound arrogant, as it's certainly not intended to be, but, rather, a reflection of our belief in who and what we are: a progressive school on an ancient site in the heart of one of the world's most exciting cities that we want to make accessible to any child who would love it here, and flourish in our care.

So, what would I say to any school considering such a move? Deep down, you will know if it's the right thing to do, and/or the necessary thing to do, for your community. You will be expecting hard work, certainly, and probably some bumps in the road. But if your conviction is that this is the right thing to do, in tune with your ethos and values, then – after all due diligence – go for it!

Most of all, don't be afraid of change: omnia mutantur, nihil interit.

Academic conference

Downe House, Berkshire has announced its annual Academic Conference is to take place on Thursday 13 June 2024. This year, the conference, is themed around maximising pupils' potential in secondary education.

The conference will be attended by former Chief Inspector of Ofsted (2017-2023), and former Chair of Ofqual, Amanda Spielman, who will address the delegates as one of the keynote speakers.

Additional keynote speakers this year include, Lisa Kerr DL, Principal at Gordonstoun and former business leader, and Jane Boardman OBE, former CEO at M&C Saatchi Talk.

The focus of the conference is to discuss how schools can best prepare pupils for their future, while providing CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and networking opportunities for

educators, who will also have the chance to attend a number of breakout sessions throughout the day.

During the breakout sessions attendees will hear from a variety of presenters, from university professors, head teachers and futurists, to senior business leaders, authors, and apprenticeship innovators. Topics covered will include how technology will transform education, reforming the secondary curriculum in the UK, ensuring pupils thrive at university and beyond; as well as discovering more about degree apprenticeships and understanding the mindset of the next generation.

The conference is open to Heads and teachers from both state and independent schools across the UK as well as anyone involved in the education of young people today.

More information is available here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/maximising-pupils-potential-how-can-we-prepare-pupils-for-the-future-tickets-852158126897>



Teacher award

Assistant Headteacher from Jersey College for Girls, Jersey, Ruth Lea, has won the Teacher Award at Digital Jersey's 6th annual Jersey Tech Awards.

The category recognises "a technology educator for their exceptional contribution to tech teaching".

Ms Lea spearheaded JCG's Digital Learning project to enhance the teaching and learning experience, bridge gaps in learning and support students absent from lessons.

Launched in September 2021, all Year 7 students were asked to come to college with a digital device – equipped with a camera,

track-pad keyboard and digital stylus. Following the success of this first year, the project was expanded to other year groups and since September 2023, all students now have their own device to use in lessons.

The project has yielded many benefits for students, including improved organisation, fewer books to carry, easier submission of work and improved typing skills, whilst increasing efficiencies for teachers. There were also environmental and financial benefits as the introduction of digital devices has led to a reduction in paper use and printing costs.

Read more about the project in the February 2024 issue of ISM:

www.independentschoolsmagazine.co.uk/issues/2024-february/index.html#p=41

Pictured: Ruth Lea with head Carl Howarth

Accessibility, inclusion and engagement with integrated voice and learning tools

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- education@readspeaker.com
- www.readspeaker.com/education/

ReadSpeaker

The screenshot displays the ReadSpeaker webReader interface with several key features highlighted:

- Listen Button and Player:** A button to listen to content, read along with highlighted text, and adjust reading speed and volume.
- Options for Selected Text:** A context menu with options for Listen, Dictionary, and Translate.
- Settings:** A panel for personalizing highlighting colors, keyboard shortcuts, and more.
- Enlarge Text:** A feature to see text being read in a larger font.
- Page Mask:** A feature to read along with a moveable focus bar.
- Help:** Easy-to-understand instructions for all features.
- Click and Listen:** A feature to click on text to have it read aloud.
- Text Mode:** A feature to read distraction-free in your preferred font, size, and colors.
- Download mp3:** A feature to download audio for offline listening.



Can your library system be used to track drones? School resources find a new home

Accessit Library has been working with schools and libraries for over 25 years and we're continuing our mission of taking the library beyond books and into the modern era. Our schools continue to reimagine what they need from a system designed to catalogue and track important resources, and we continue to develop and ensure that we support the wider school.

So, what are we seeing in schools?

Literacy is being linked with the whole curriculum

First and foremost, Students need to be able to read and access library resources that help them connect with all their subjects - not just English. The scope is going beyond books and that's been an ongoing trend as we see eBooks, audiobooks, ClickView, Accelerated Reader, and other integrations grow in popularity.

Literacy journeys often start with a passion, and by having one online hub of resources that also allows dedicated curated pages for subjects or topics (in our case Topic Dashboards), then students can delve deep into their passion subject and grow their literacy skills without realising that's what they're doing.

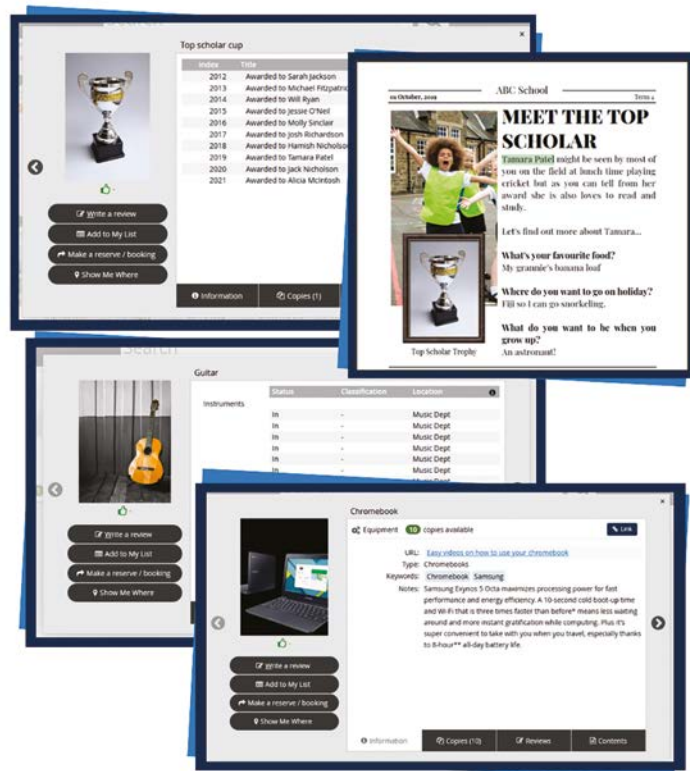
Schools want one place to track resources

Similarly, school leaders need a place to catalogue and track school resources beyond books. These might include cameras, Chromebooks, drones, instruments, and even sports equipment and uniforms.

Schools are coming to us more often and asking what else they can store, catalogue, and track within Accessit rather than paying for different inventory software or hoping they don't crash the spreadsheet they're trying to use now.

Flooding, fires and theft

We're seeing more and more school leaders and insurance companies



needing to know what the value of a school's assets are, especially with those 1 in 100-year floods becoming a yearly event!

As weather events cause havoc, we're seeing more schools using Accessit Library as the place to track their owned resources and also their value; so, if the worst does happen they have a reliable inventory, value and often an image of what was lost or damaged. We never thought we would be friends with insurance companies the way we are now!

School Archives are cool again

With the additional focus on school archives these days, we're seeing schools converting their newsletters and yearbooks into Accessit resources as indexed PDFs - meaning they will be searchable and accessible for years to come.

Even school trophies are being added to collections including

photos and the list of previous winners in the record to preserve your school's history. So, when your child gets to school they can search your name and see how you really were the best squash player in school in your day!

We're glad that Accessit Library has become an even better solution; our software makes the library's learning resources accessible to students at school or from home and for the school, Accessit is the one place to track and manage all your school's resources.

Interested in tracking more? Get a free, no-obligation demonstration from one of our experts, and if you're already an Accessit customer but want to keep your library and archives separate, we can arrange that for you too.

ABC School		Current Value of Stock Purchased 01/01/2016 to 31/12/2024		
Media Type	Number	Purchase Cost of Acquisitions	Current Value of Acquisitions	
Archive				
PDF	1	£0.00	£0.00	
Totals for , Archive:		1	£0.00	£0.00
Audio				
Fiction	7	£75.00	£62.90	
Non-Fiction	6	£15.00	£12.58	
eAudiobook	5	£0.00	£0.00	
Totals for , Audio:		18	£90.00	£75.48
Book				
Chinese Language	5	£113.79	£113.79	
Fiction	3,814	£51,202.69	£43,079.82	
Graphic Novel	56	£927.30	£867.45	
Junior Fiction	88	£562.30	£517.56	
National Library Loan	19	£0.00	£0.00	
Non-Fiction	2,382	£32,919.74	£27,439.30	
Picture Book	396	£5,089.57	£4,731.17	
Senior Fiction	54	£579.85	£497.99	
Teacher Resources	27	£30.00	£25.16	
Textbook	1,455	£12,475.20	£12,254.36	
Totals for , Book:		8,296	£103,900.44	£89,526.60

Track ALL of your school's resources... ...even the kitchen sink.



Schools around the World are using **Accessit Library** to:

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- Track purchase value and storage locations
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The importance of STEAM in schools

Why is STEAM such a vital part of the curriculum? Headmaster of Truro Prep School, Cornwall, Rob Morse, looks at the role these subjects play in the lives of children now and for the future.



Rob Morse

In many ways, steam has always been an exciting concept. From Thomas Savery's first steam engine in 1698 through to Stephenson's Rocket and Richard Trevithick's Puffin' Devil (as a Cornishman I am duty-bound to refer you to Christmas Eve in 1801 when the road locomotive climbed the hill in Camborne). The first steam-powered ferry was the Hibernian, which carried passengers between Holyhead and Dublin and, of course, the great engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel used steam engines to power his giant ships across the Atlantic.

For the last 150 years or more, however, steam has fallen out of the headlines and is almost entirely limited to discussions around kettles and irons. But in the last few years, STEAM has risen again (please excuse the pun) in an exciting marriage of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics. STEAM is at the heart of a new, educational revolution.

The world that our children will inherit will be significantly more exciting and more challenging than ours' today. The growth of artificial intelligence and ever-evolving information technology will render

many of our current occupations and processes redundant. From an educational perspective, the same technological advances will mean that memorising vast quantities of information will also be unnecessary. Rather, it will be the capability to navigate and manipulate technology, alongside the ability to be resilient and creative and to work collaboratively that will give our children a head start. And this is where STEAM makes its mark today.

Whilst STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) has become part of our regular vocabulary in recent times, STEAM includes the Arts. The Arts include visual art and design, but also humanities, language, music, drama, dance and media. The incorporation of the Arts provides the opportunity for scientific and technological concepts to be developed through creative processes. STEAM necessitates the use of both the right (creative) and left (logical) sides of the brain and is at its best when it is a platform for collaborative working.

The Rhode Island School of Design (identified as the birthplace of STEAM) states, "The goal of STEAM



is to foster the true innovation that comes with combining the mind of a scientist or technologist with that of an artist or a designer". It is this essence of adaptability, creativity and innovation that makes STEAM so important. At a time when our planet is under greater stress and strain than ever before and as we, as a human race, all too slowly appreciate the need for caring for our environment, innovation and creativity will be key if we are to create and maintain a sustainable future. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary approach to STEAM helps prepare our children for a life where adaptability will be essential. We are repeatedly told that AI and robots will perform many of our current-day manual roles. Many of our children will take up occupations that do not yet exist. Moreover, these occupations will be ever-changing as technology continues to advance. So, it is reasonable to suggest that STEAM will be good for our future, our planet and our future workforce. But, equally importantly, it is highly engaging.

Perhaps some children will not be sold on the premise that STEAM will help them in their future

employment but they might think differently when we identify that videogames are the product of strategic, creative, technological, mathematical and artistic thinking and operations. There is plenty of evidence that suggests that video games (used in moderation and at the appropriate age level) help to develop these self-same skills.

And of course, the very best aspect of STEAM is that it can be great fun and inspire our learners. Here at Truro School Prep, we recently held a STEAM discovery morning for primary school children from across the county of Cornwall. Activities included design and technology, print-tastic art, computing and coding. The workshops, based on the school's regular curriculum, naturally offered the opportunity for the children to learn and develop their skills. But, the most rewarding aspect of these sessions was the communication, cooperation and sheer delight that was so clearly evident as these children grew in skill and confidence.

Steam was at the heart of a revolution in the past and STEAM will certainly be a key aspect of our future; exciting times lie ahead.



Pictured: Truro School pupils participating in STEAM activities

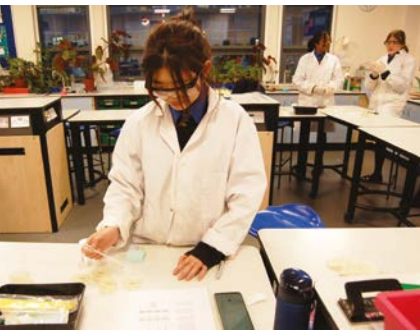
Daffodil DNA

Students from St Margaret's School for Girls, Aberdeen are working with STEM professionals and academics to help scientists learn more about the genetic traits of daffodils. The Daffodil DNA Project, created by teacher Jon Hale on the Isle of Jersey and run by the University of Dundee, aims to inspire the next generation of plant scientists and botanical horticulturalists as well as obtain genetic data on a very valuable but understudied genus.

The collaborative project, funded by a Royal Society Partnership Grant, gives students the

opportunity to experience DNA sequencing in the classroom and engage with technology to identify and map the DNA that gives rise to different daffodil flower colours, shapes and sizes. The students will be using living collections that originate from heritage varieties bred at Brodie Castle, located in Moray, Scotland, and conserved in a national collection at Croft 16, a partnership set up for conserving surplus bulbs of heritage daffodil varieties. This has been supplemented with new cultivars from Grampian Growers who are interested in helping to support the pioneering educational work.

The STEM partners involved in the project are from the James Hutton Institute and include a team of PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, and senior academics from the University of Aberdeen and University of Dundee, giving students the opportunity to see the potential of a career in science.



Pictured: Student in a St Margaret's science class

Inspiring a love of science

Felsted School, Essex, recently hosted over 40 pupils from schools across the region for a Science Experience Day, formulated to inspire and encourage pupils in Years 5 & 6 to aspire to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art (Creativity) and Mathematics) related studies and careers in the future.

Students experimented with slime, tiny live Daphnia crustaceans, and catapults. Those in attendance included: Fritch Green Academy, Essex, Howe Green Prep, Hertfordshire, Felsted Prep, Essex, Coopersale Hall, Essex, Elm Green Prep, Essex and Woodford Green, Essex.

Many students left the day inspired to think seriously about pursuing a future career in science, and were challenged to change their view of a stereotypical scientist in a white coat working on their own in a laboratory and often looking like Einstein!

Pictured: The Science Experience Day



Head of Science at Felsted, Heather Mollison, commented; "Science Experience Day is a highlight in the year. The Year 5 and 6 students were an absolute delight and many have left understanding that science is collaborative and encompasses many different areas of life and the world around us."



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"I really like how the book just gives you pictures. So, you have the idea in your head of what you're supposed to do..."

– School 13, Year 4 Students



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Barfield Prep School officially opens a brand new sustainable dining hall with commercial kitchen

This state-of-the-art school building designed sustainably using biophilic principles, promises to connect pupils to the natural environment and inspire them while they dine.

Barfield School enlisted the help of award-winning TG Escapes Modular Eco Buildings to design and build the new facilities. TG Escapes use a method of modular construction that creates a cost-effective permanent structure faster, and with less disruption than a traditional build, ensuring educational continuity for staff and students. Their bespoke timber frame buildings are sustainable, inspirational and built around biophilic design principles, which moderate stress levels and enhance engagement.

The new building at Barfield Prep School, which took four months to complete, provides a stunning new dining hall. The use of full-height windows running from floor to ceiling brings the outside in. This new room offers panoramic views across nature and ample natural light, making lunchtimes much

For more information visit www.tgescapes.co.uk, call 0800 917 7726 or email info@tgescapes.co.uk

more pleasurable for the pupils and staff.

Other new additions include a commercial kitchen with cold and dry stores, a pot wash area, an office, toilet, plant room and an external veranda overlooking the Head Teacher's lawn.

Andy Boyle, Barfield Prep School's Headmaster, said: "Since I joined the school, the need for a dedicated dining hall has been something I have wanted to address. For over 50 years the sports hall doubled up as the place to eat, it was a noisy, chaotic, impractical space with high windows and no views.

Andy continued: "Thanks to TG Escapes we now have a beautifully designed, eco-friendly, functional building for everyone at the school to enjoy and benefit from. I cannot speak highly enough about how professional

their team has been. Having had other developments done recently, we were expecting there to be significant disruption to our school day but they have managed to go quietly about their business without impacting on us at all."

The dining hall space will also host Barfield's Upper School pupils for their after-school Prep sessions and Prep snacks, and their match teas after sports fixtures.

TG Escapes predominantly focus on the education sector, creating stylish buildings from sustainable materials that enhance the well-being of their occupants and help protect the planet. This has been reflected in Barfield Prep School's new low energy 'A' rated building which was achieved with solar panels installed on the roof, air source heat pumps, active ventilation and heat recovery, and



LED lighting throughout. This will keep running costs down for years to come.

Clive Hicks, Project Manager at TG Escapes said: "It's been an honour to work with Barfield Prep School on this project. We are committed to providing pupils with a positive environment where all can thrive. This has been achieved on this project through sustainable design decisions and material choices. The pupils now have views of nature and high levels of natural light and ventilation – a great boost for all to enjoy!"

To celebrate the launch Barfield Prep School held an opening ceremony and welcomed a visit from the Mayor of Farnham, Cllr Alan Earwalker.

Broadening a school's appeal through smart use of the campus

With many schools looking to extend their appeal to families with more wide-ranging aims for their children, the question is "how best to achieve this on a school campus with all the constraints familiar to independent schools?" Architect, James McGillvray, provides some advice.

While tweed, the sound of leather on willow and the recitation of Latin declensions is how independent schools are still portrayed in literature and film, we all know the reality is very different. In an increasingly competitive market, schools need to appeal to a cohort of parents who drive electric cars, put wellness at the heart of family life, nurture their children's dreams of working in one of the many branches of media and technology both old and new and, (whisper it) don't wear ties to work.

Notwithstanding this, many schools have rich traditions of success in more traditional sports and academic subjects, so how can they develop their campus to welcome this increased diversity without pushing out the very things which made their name?

The other half of this dilemma is the great stock of buildings which most schools have which are listed or crumbling or designed for activities no longer taught (my own school had a dusty boxing ring in the attic).

Most schools already make accommodations for different faiths and other spiritual practices and varied assemblies are now the norm, but there is much more that can be

done. It would be foolhardy for an architect to start lecturing teachers on Twenty-First Century pedagogy, but we have spent a lot of time finding ways to alter buildings to make them fit for that very education.

Frequently, we used to discuss with clients the ideal scenario where funds would permit the complete demolition of buildings and their replacement with shiny new beacons of education, but with the moral imperative to address sustainability, this is no longer the case. Building a completely new dance and yoga studio is the last resort after all possible options for repurposing existing buildings have been exhausted; a happy marriage of economy and sustainability. Squash courts become drama studios; swimming pools become recital rooms.

Whenever anyone points to a state-of-the-art classroom, I notice one particular thing. It is almost always the same dimensions as a standard classroom has been for the last one hundred years or so and it will probably have a door in one corner and windows down one side. Many other things will change but that basic building framework remains in

one of three sizes – small, for A-level teaching or tutorials, medium – for general teaching, and large – for science, art, DT, or one of the range of exciting new STEAM workshops and labs beginning to emerge for exploration, collaboration and making.

The reason for pointing this out is that if, having exhausted all refurbishment options, you are contemplating building additional space, consider adaptability not just flexibility. Flexibility could be considered to be making the rooms work for school activities within the academic year whereas adaptability in this context allows for relatively easy change over the years as new areas of study or co-curricular activity emerge.

When discussing new classroom design with your professional team, ensure that you will not be constrained by frequent loadbearing walls or a particularly quirky shape or façade pattern. If the building is designed as a frame structure (one where most of the walls are not loadbearing), it becomes a relatively easy summer holiday alteration to reconfigure spaces. Three small classrooms fit into two medium ones. Two medium classrooms become one large one. A small one combined with a medium makes a great general classroom for younger children with sufficient space for different activities within the same space. Adaptability is the only sustainable way to build. It is impossible to predict what the curriculum will look like in a generation's time and so there are limits to the flexibility features which can be installed now.

Of course, the way teaching spaces are equipped and used changes dramatically over time and there has been great progress in the study of the environmental qualities –



James McGillvray

natural light, fresh air, temperature, acoustics – which make for a really effective learning environment, but the modules of built space remain broadly the same.

I should declare at this point that we have designed a completely open plan primary school (at our client's specific instruction), but the space standards and zoning remained the same.

In between the key teaching and learning spaces there are opportunities to improve inclusion without wholesale rebuilding. Acoustics in corridors can be softened with carpeting and treatment to ceilings making for a calmer class-change. Loos can be created as individual rooms designated simply "Pupils", or "Staff" helping to address the complex area of dealing equitably and compassionately with gender identity issues.

Relatively cost-effective landscape design can transform an unloved patch of crumbling tarmac into a welcoming social space. Many schools have large areas of space in their grounds which cannot be developed due to planning constraints, but this does not stop them becoming valuable resources for environmental sciences, or forest school.

Creating spectacular, diverse, inspiring and effective learning environments is a great way to support the developing educational aims of a school, and sometimes change needs a dramatic statement, but evolution can also be a powerful tool for adapting to social change.



Music centre at Leighton Park School, Berkshire which wrapped a new foyer around the existing theatre

NVB Architects – www.nvbarchitects.co.uk



STEAM building



Forres Sandle Manor School, Hampshire, has announced its planning application for a new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) building has been approved, paving the way for the construction of a multi-million-pound facility.

Key features of the new STEAM building include:

- Three Specialist Science

Pictured: The proposed new STEAM building

Labs to provide students with hands-on learning experiences in various scientific disciplines.

- DT Hub with CAD Suite
- New School Library
- Multiple Art Studios with Gallery Space

Construction of the new STEAM building is set to commence in the coming months.

School expansion plans



Credit: Gordonstoun

Gordonstoun, Moray, has unveiled plans to invest around £15 million in the next phase of its Campus Masterplan which will include three major projects over the next three years.

- The first project will be a new Coastguard Centre, due to open by the end of 2024. This will be home to one of Gordonstoun's nine rescue and community services, through which every student is involved in active service to the local area.
- The second project is a new Solar Farm to provide low carbon energy for the school and, it is hoped in due course, some of its neighbours. The Solar Farm will also deliver important power resilience. Work is now underway to secure the necessary land, with construction expected to commence later this year and the farm planned to be operational in 2025.

- Thirdly, planning permission has been secured for the next building in the new Classroom Village. This large, multi-purpose space will house a Sixth Form Centre and a Business and Enterprise Centre and will provide options for learning and social use for the school and wider community, and is expected to open in 2026.

These planned developments come just two months after the formal opening of a new classroom hub, the Queen Elizabeth II Rooms, by the school's Warden, HRH The Princess Royal.

The developments are integral to the school's sustainable strategy, reducing energy use and carbon footprint, and the new buildings will incorporate many of the low carbon features of The Queen Elizabeth II Rooms.

Pictured: Sixth Form Centre and a Business and Enterprise Centre

Restoration work underway



Surbiton High School, Surrey, has announced the unveiling of a new scaffolding banner at Surbiton Assembly Rooms. Crafted by local artist Lisa Tolley, Artist and Illustrator, and completed by an in-house graphic designer, this artwork has been designed to celebrate the history of the building whilst the school embarks on significant restoration

Pictured: The banner at Surbiton Assembly Rooms

work at the Surbiton Assembly Rooms. This banner will serve as a visual reminder of the school's commitment to preserving heritage and fostering community spirit.

Principal at Surbiton High School, Rebecca Glover said: "The banner not only adds a touch of beauty to the scaffolding but also reinforces our dedication to our community and its heritage."

Land investment

Longridge Towers School, Northumberland, has recently completed a purchase of almost 10 acres of land that will extend the School estate to the east and south. This investment is to allow an increase in the school athletics and team sports facilities over the coming years.

The land had originally been part of St Mary's Convent School, the predecessor to Longridge. Sold for agricultural use more than 40 years ago, the land came to market in autumn 2023. "We saw this as a once in a lifetime opportunity for the School," said Headteacher, Jonathan Lee. "Expanding the estate gives us space to grow and extend the provision for pupils. In the short term, we will be working to update fencing and hedging. We will then be working to extend

Pictured: Longridge Towers School additional land



the School's cross country running course before marking out a full size, 400m grass running track."

Currently celebrating its 40-year anniversary, Longridge Towers School was formed in 1983 following the Ursulines' decision to close St Mary's Convent School. Opening with an initial pupil roll of 28, today the School educates over 330 pupils across nursery, primary, and secondary age groups.

2024: An architect's perspective

At BHM Architects we are third generation managers of a 67 year old practice that has specialized in design for independent schools for many years. We have lived through more than a few business cycles, each with its own set of challenges.

2024 is not short of them. Covid19 and Brexit were followed by hyper inflation in construction and now VAT on school fees. Together these have led to the cancellation of a number of major projects, a gloomy outlook and some serious adjustments to our forward planning.

The same isn't true of the Middle and Far East where, although the effects of the pandemic are still playing out, we are seeing amazing academy style schools being built, with heavy emphasis on inspirational design around the concept of STEAM and well integrated social spaces.

In past cycles here, we have seen fallow periods end suddenly, with a hollowed out construction sector struggling to respond to demand. The best prepared clients are ready to catch the wave before things get too busy and prices go back up.

We have recently had lots of enquiries about master planning, which is a vital but relatively low cost exercise. Detailed investigations of the school's needs and potential developments can inform decisions on funding and planning that are essential to prepare the ground ahead.

It is also worth noting how much detailed design has been

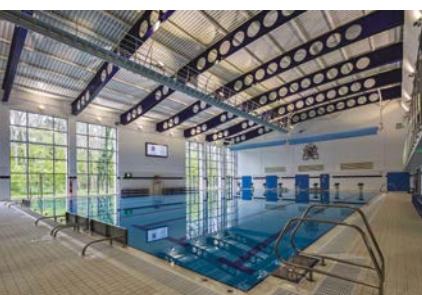


frontloaded into the Planning process in recent years. This is now a multi disciplinary effort to satisfy ever increasing policy demands, particularly on sustainability, but applications can be made for a limited investment clearing the way for a decision to build.


While one can never predict the Unknown Unknowns (to channel Rumsfeld), our Known Known is that thoughtful and

well constructed architecture will continue to add immense value to the school experience and has a big part to play in restoring our collective wellbeing.

Finally, to state the obvious, when inflation comes down prices are still going up! Delaying construction projects rarely saves money in the long term, and what feels expensive today soon looks like a bargain in hindsight.



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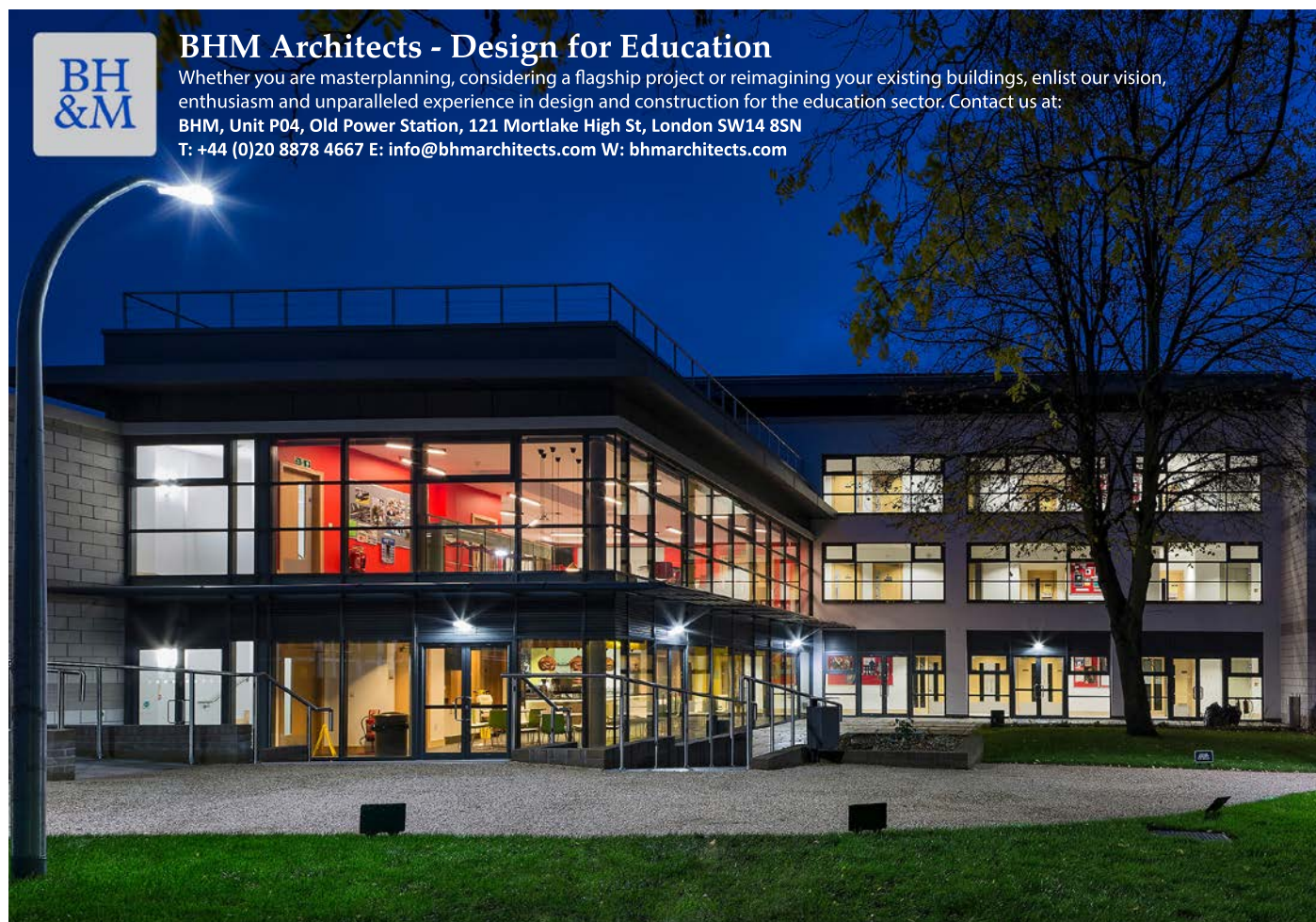


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Charities Act 2022: A guide for independent schools

What are the rules that apply when a charity is looking to amend a governing document? With the latest phase of the Charities Act 2022 coming into force, Legal director in the charities and independent schools team at law firm Moore Barlow, Paul Ridout, discusses the implications this has for the independent school sector.



Paul Ridout

We have now seen almost all the changes in the Charities Act 2022 come into force, with the third major phase of implementation happening in March this year. This phase included further fine-tuning of the rules that apply when a charity wishes to make changes to its governing document. One of the guiding principles behind the changes has been to make the rules apply similarly to all charities, regardless of their legal form.

Some schools are established by Royal Charter, and the rules for them were modified back in October 2022. However, with the majority of independent schools having been set up as companies limited by guarantee, the changes that took effect on 7 March this year are the ones that will make a difference.

What's changed?

As before, a school can pass a special resolution to amend any part of its Articles of Association, and certain types of amendment will still only be effective if the Charity Commission has approved them. By way of a reminder of the rules that applied up to now, these "regulated alterations" were those which:

1. add to, remove from or otherwise alter a statement of the school's charitable purposes, which has meant that even a slight change in the wording would be caught, even if it made no substantive difference to the purposes,
2. change what can be done with the assets of the school when it is wound up;

3. would allow governors, members or persons connected with them to receive any benefit from the school.

The first change to note is that an amendment to the statement of a school's charitable purposes will now only require the Commission's approval if it makes a substantive change to the purposes. This will make it easier to modernise wording that may have remained unchanged for decades and no longer reflects current thinking about education or gender.

The second change to note is that the Commission is now required, when asked for approval for a regulated alteration, to apply the same criteria that it has to apply when considering requests from charities structured as trusts or as charitable incorporated organisations.

For schools set up as companies, this represents, in theory at least, a tightening of the rules. Before 7 March, the Commission had a relatively relaxed policy on approving changes to the purposes of a charitable company, and this involved being satisfied that:

- the new purposes are exclusively charitable;
- the decision to make the change is a rational one in the circumstances of the school, and
- the new purposes do not undermine or work against the previous purposes.

Under the new rules, the Commission must consider the

following factors when deciding whether or not to approve a change to a school's charitable purposes:

- the purposes of the school when it was established;
- the desirability of securing that the school's proposed purposes are, so far as reasonably practicable, similar to the existing purposes; and
- the need for the school's purposes to be suitable and effective in the light of current social and economic circumstances.

What does this mean for schools to amend a governing document?

When applying to the Charity Commission for approval of any regulated alteration, schools will be required not only to explain the reasons for making the changes but also to tell the Commission whether the change could be controversial or of public interest. The Commission may, in some cases, require the school to give public notice of the proposed changes and can also give public notice itself. The decision will then be made in the light of any responses to that public notice.

A special resolution needs to be passed by the members of a charitable company and not by its directors. In many schools, the Governors are the company law members as well as the directors, which keeps things fairly simple. However, it is still important that the resolution is passed by the

Governors acting in their capacity as members. The procedures to be followed are likely to differ slightly from those followed at regular meetings of the governing body.

In some schools, the members are actually a different group of people. In such cases, care needs to be taken to ensure that proper notice is given to members and that the proposed changes are fully explained to them. It may be easier to ask them to approve a resolution in writing rather than to convene a meeting of members; the power to use the written resolution procedure is available to all companies by virtue of the Companies Act 2006, even if the Articles do not expressly allow it.

Closing thoughts

The rule changes outlined above relate only to charitable companies, not to any permanently endowed assets that the school may hold, special trusts such as scholarship or prize funds, or linked charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs). Similar rules will apply to them but with some slight variations.

While navigating the process may require legal counsel, ultimately, these changes ensure schools remain true to their founding purpose while having the flexibility to adapt to an ever-changing social and economic environment.



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Finally, the new Ford 17-seat minibus, ready for your September term

John Peterson, Director of Minibus Services at Rivervale, explains why there has been such a long wait and how Rivervale has secured a number of 17-seat Fords available for the September term.



John Peterson

Why the shortage?

One of the questions we, and other minibus providers, have been repeatedly asked over the last 18-24 months is 'when can we expect to receive our minibus?'. There has been production delays since the pandemic compounded the shortage

of semi-conductor chips needed for the electronics of vehicles. The shortage of new vehicles meant that prices for used minibuses, cars and vans skyrocketed as they were not coming onto the market as frequently. But the wait is now over for Rivervale customers.

Rivervale has a number of 17-seat Ford Transit minibuses ready to go

Rivervale is one of the leading providers of minibuses for the UK education sector, as well as commercial and private vans and cars. We have a very good

relationship with Ford and as such we have been able to secure a number of Ford 17 seat minibuses, 16-seat Ford eTransits and the brand new 9-seat Ford Tourneo, all can be delivered to you ready for the start of term in September.

What's included in a lease deal with Rivervale?

When you take a leasing contract with Rivervale, we not only offer a great deal on a vehicle, but there are lots of extras included that other suppliers simply can not and do not offer.

Low deposits – We keep deposits low, and fix monthly fees, with no hidden extras (such as delivery costs), so that your cash flow is protected.

Part-exchange – We will look at any minibus or vehicle you have for sale to part-exchange or purchase from you, whether you decide to take a new vehicle from us or not.

This means you don't have to worry about the problems of private sales; advertising costs, viewings, removing existing logos and any after-sale issues.

Fully maintained contracts – It's in both our interests that we fully maintain your vehicle. That means routine services, MOTs and safety inspections are included and you don't need to worry about them beyond making your vehicles available.

Minibus Safety inspections – Rivervale includes safety inspections in your contract as they are an

important part of your obligation to maintain a roadworthy vehicle. Our fleets of mobile engineers will come to your premises to complete these checks, and can also complete pre-MOT checks too – so you don't need to worry about drop off and pick up.

Logo and livery included – If you'd like us to, we will add your logo and livery before delivery so that your minibus is ready to drive and represent your school from day one.

Free access to support services – There is more to running minibuses than simply having the vehicle. If

you take a vehicle from Rivervale we will give you free access to our Online Minibus Management Course so you can understand all the obligations you have under a Section 19 Permit. It also includes tips and hacks to keep your drivers and vehicles safer and incident free.

We also have a free app, myminibusmanager.com, that anyone can use whether they are a customer of ours or not. The app is designed to help complete and manage your daily and weekly walkaround checks.

A few highlights of the 17 Seat Ford Transit

Ford Minibuses remain a firm favourite for the education sector because of their comfort and safety features. Drivers are well looked after with comfortable and adjustable seats, with even a power point for a laptop in the new version. The Ford Transit is also available with a FordPass Connect Modem so you can provide 4G wifi for up to 10 devices, keeping your passengers happy.

The new Ford Transit has impressive safety features as standard including adaptive cruise control that identifies the prevailing speed limit and automatically maintains it for you. If there is slower traffic in front of you the minibus will automatically detect it and adjust your speed, so you'll maintain a safe gap until the traffic has cleared.

The minibus' radars and cameras scan the road ahead and their pre-collision assist will detect if there is a risk of collision with a vehicle, pedestrian, or cyclist. The driver will be warned and if they don't respond the vehicle will automatically apply the brakes to avoid or reduce the impact of the collision.



The Ford Transit does need D1 entitlement to drive and comes with all the standard features of park assist and reverse camera to help manoeuvrability.

Get in touch

If you want to find out more about the Ford 17-seat Transit, eTransit, 9-seat Tourneo or any other vehicle then please visit Rivervale.co.uk/minibus or get in touch with our friendly team on 01869 253744 or email minibus@rivervale.co.uk to get a no obligation quote.

If you're going, come visit us on stand 58 at the ISBA Show in Cardiff on the 20-22nd May.



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Profile

In conversation with Sarah Lyons

Born:
1970

Married:
to Dominic Lyons since 1996

Children:
3 children aged 28, 25 and 22

Schools and Universities attended:
Belvoir High, King Edward's VII Upper School, Brooksby Melton College and the University of West England - Bristol

First job:
Primary school teacher

First job in independent sector:
Current role as Headteacher at Highfields Independent School and Day Nursery

Appointed to current job:
September 2019

Favourite piece of Music:
Ludivico Einaudi - Primavera

Favourite food:
Seafood and Southern Indian cuisine

Drink: Nyetimber (or any kind of tea!)

Favourite holiday destination:
Top 3 a Mediterranean sunshine holiday, French Alps for skiing, or Scottish highlands with our 3 dogs

Favourite TV:
Currently 'Race across the world' as I love travel programmes and planning new family adventures

I love the daily Ted Talks on Spotify too

Epitaph:
"When you get the chance to sit out or dance, I hope you dance"

Q Who or what inspired you to get into teaching?

A I had a wonderful Reception teacher called Mrs. Simpson who was so kind and I have immensely happy and vivid memories of my primary school days in a small village school in rural Leicestershire - where I developed a real passion for learning and all aspects of school life. At home I would line my dolls and teddies up with a register and plan lessons for them - particularly enjoying planning and delivering topical assemblies! As I grew older, I would entertain our neighbours' children in a schoolroom I created in our garage at home, with my parents frequently telling me to go outside and play in the garden rather than spend balmy summer days in the garage! My great Aunt was a Headteacher and when she visited, she would bring me books and learning resources which I adored and used with my toys, siblings and neighbours' children. My uncle was involved in ITT and another Aunt was a teacher who arranged for me to attend her school for a day in a lovely school in Wollaton. When I was 5 years old I fractured my femur resulting in a an extended stay in hospital. I was visited by the hospital teacher which was the highlight of every day! Pursuing a career in education was an emphatic decision and always my plan.

Q After a number of years' experience in the state sector you made the move into the independent sector with your current job. Why the change? What would be your top tip for someone considering a similar sector move?

A I had become increasingly frustrated in the state sector, in that I was unable to deliver the type of provision that I know children need to optimise their learning potential and wellbeing during their formative years. Essential interventions were being removed, classes were being combined to create increasingly larger class sizes, and curricular provision was being squeezed with Sport, the Arts and STEM subjects suffering the most. My top tip for others would be to ensure your independent school is part of an

organisation such as the ISA and make the most of their induction programmes and regional events. Being a member of the ISA made my transition so much easier and immediately I had access to a ready-made network of like-minded and talented colleagues with a wealth of information and advice.

Q Before becoming head at Highfields you spent the preceding nine months visiting the school as part of the leadership transition process. These situations can generate an awkward feeling of getting in the way too soon. How did you avoid that?

A The ethos of Highfields is such that I immediately felt welcomed and part of the team, so this was not an issue. Everyone was extremely eager to show me the ropes! The difficulty was more not wanting to leave Highfields - something I know that everyone who learns and works at Highfields feels too.

Q You are reported as saying that teacher retention at Highfields is 'really good'. What do you do as a head to ensure this?

A At Highfields we ensure our team have a very good work-life balance, wellbeing for all members of our school community is a top priority. We have a REALL provision commitment which extends across all aspects of Highfields School life including our staffing and governance ethos. REALL represents Relevant, Experiential, Aspirational, Lasting and Laughter which means as a senior leader, my intention is for all members of our team to feel happy, supported and professionally fulfilled in their roles. Everything we do at Highfields is purposeful and contextualised; there is no unnecessary admin, paperwork or monitoring so all energies are focused into giving our pupils the very highest quality educational experience possible. We have recently been nominated as finalists in two categories in the Newark Business Awards - 'Team of the Year' and 'Employer of the Year'. The support network within our staff team is exceptional and we are very proud of the relationships we nurture and sustain. This is the Highfields differential, and we are very proud of it.

Sarah Lyons has been Head at Highfields Independent School and Day Nursery, Nottinghamshire since 2019. She was previously the headteacher at a school within the Rutland Learning Trust with specialisms in SENDs and Early Years.



Q You provide parents with top tips for choosing a school. One of them suggests that parents consider whether a school delivers 'financial literacy, growth mindset, leadership or well-being programmes?' How does Highfields make time for them all as well as the usual timetable subjects?

A This is a great question however, ultimately, schools make time for what matters to them and all the above are an integral part of our Highfields offer because they are essential skills for our global citizens of the future. We have designed our curricular provision, particularly in academic subjects, to be highly interconnected to ensure learning can be firmly embedded, meaningful, and contextualised for our learners; this also means we can optimise the use of our time. The programmes you cite are vehicles for our learning and not what we are learning. It's the 'how' of learning which can make a vital difference to the development of a learner's skills. Our curriculum offer is designed very purposefully and dynamically to optimise this. For example, our leadership programme begins when our pupils enter main school and is interwoven through key learning experiences throughout their time at Highfields culminating in their Prefect roles in Form 6.

Q Highfields has introduced a "Dojo shop" to encourage children to develop financial literacy. How does this project work and how have you measured what difference it has made?

A Our pupils earn Dojo points for demonstrating positive learning behaviours, kindness, achievements in any subject area. We particularly reward behaviours such as resilience, resourcefulness and perseverance. There are smaller items the children can buy, such as rubbers, gel pens etc, as well as more expensive items, such as "sit in your teacher's chair for a day" and "lunch menu designer" which they would need to save up their points for. Children start off by wanting to spend all of the points as they

receive them, but then begin to realise should they save, they could purchase one of those coveted higher value items.

Q Form 6 children are invited to stand for positions of responsibility, including Head Boy and Head Girl. All the children are involved in this decision-making process, following election protocol. Do staff have no say at all?

A The staff do have a vote however there are far more pupils than staff members, so it is the student body who has the overwhelming majority of the vote. Pupils create their own campaigns prior to the voting day, they also prepare and deliver a speech. Every pupil has a voting slip with photographs of each candidate which are placed into ballot boxes. Time is spent preparing children for this process with learning around British values and opportunities to reflect on characteristics of a great leader – the outcomes we also expect for all our Highfieldians!

Q Your recent ISI Report has highlighted the readiness of leaders to listen and act on pupil ideas and suggestions. This has led to the instigation of various activities by pupils and even the creation of a "chill room". How do you sift suggestions and still keep pupils engaged?

A We have distinct processes for pupils to share and develop their ideas. This encourages reflection, resourcefulness, and leadership skills in our children. Our school council is part of the mechanism for pupil-led suggestions, activities, and events as we always encourage children to take a democratic approach to new initiatives. We also have to teach them to look at the bigger picture, think altruistically and consider the impact and implications of their suggestions. A great example was when we redesigned our Sport and PE offer to eliminate gender bias which was initiated by a pupil who then conducted a survey and led a consultation process. It is so powerful for children to know they can effect change.

Q Highfields School caters for just over 100 pupils between the ages of 2 and 11. This covers key transition periods for your pupils. Recent research from early years charity, Kindred?, suggests that problems with school-readiness have got worse in the last 18 months. What has been your experience?

A Concerns around school readiness have been gradually increasing over recent years but more noticeably following the pandemic. My experience as an early years consultant correlates with much of the research evidenced in Kindred's February 2024 survey outcomes. The EYFS areas of learning which are undoubtedly least strong on entry are in communication and language, children's personal, social and emotional development and their physical development. Toileting is an area where increasing support and input is needed, along with ensuring young learners can be active rather than expecting them to be able to sit and listen. We have an exceptional nursery at Highfields which provides a nurturing and stimulating environment for young children with a highly skilled and experienced staff team. Our small class sizes allow children to reach their potential through individual attention and wonderfully enriching experiences. Recognising neurodiversity and individual strengths, and working in close partnerships with families, we can build a tremendous foundation for formal schooling whatever a child's starting point.

Q You have recently embarked on a school sustainability pilot project. What has this involved, what outcomes are you looking to achieve?

A We are aiming ultimately for Highfieldians of all ages to be leaders of sustainability, both now and in the future. The project has involved an audit of all areas of our organisation encompassing the environment and operations, in addition to our educational provision to optimise sustainability and minimise any negative environmental impact. It is driven by leaders of all ages, with our first mission to reduce waste. **Continued >**

We have several prefects assisting our Eco Captain in collecting daily data on energy usage, and our lunchtime team are working extremely hard to reduce food waste and minimise food miles on our menu. All stakeholders within our community are involved and committed to the process, including our governors, with the intention of creating a cultural shift which is sustainable rather than a 'one off' project. It is a very exciting time for us and involves a real whole team effort. Our pupils produce a regular sustainability newsletter to record and share progress and have recently held a plastic free day to commemorate Earth Day. Next steps include reviewing school transport, creating a new pond and wildlife

area and further reducing plastic use. The results we have achieved in a short period of time are truly astonishing!

Q You enjoy dance as a pastime. 'Dancing rather than sitting out' is part of your life philosophy. If you rarely sit out, aren't you denying yourself time to reflect?

A I do dance in my spare time – sometimes competitively but mostly just for pleasure, and dancing is what makes me feel most alive and happy. When you have a good work-life balance you are better able to have time to reflect; everyone has to figure out what

works for them. At Highfields we support our pupils on a journey of self-awareness and personal development, so they are well equipped to navigate both senior school and adulthood. Spending time with my pupils always prompts reflection for me because young people are so open, honest, and uninhibited. At Highfields we are so aware of the importance of enabling opportunities for high quality interactions with each other especially living in such a high-tech world. This quote represents my mantra of making the most of every opportunity, particularly to do what brings you joy and makes your heart sing. At Highfields we educate the heart as well as the mind!

NEU update

Something bigger is going on in the sector than the Teachers' Pension Scheme

NEU independent sector National Official, John Richardson, reflects on the current wave of TPS disputes which is seeing increased union activity, and a developing consciousness, as NEU members in independent schools submit pay claims and look to organise support staff.

For NEU members in the independent sector, the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) continues to be the big, school by school, battle ground. But, beyond the collective battles and potential individual loss, something far more fundamental is happening – a loss of trust in employers and a growing union consciousness.

Employers who attempt to deprive teachers of their contractual rights and threaten to fire and rehire are crossing the Rubicon.

Independent school staff who might never have dreamt of going on strike are now encouraging others to do so.

Lessons being learnt are that the only way in which staff can protect their terms and conditions is by collectivising, joining a union, and using the leverage of industrial action.

There is another major issue.

Some independent schools have entered new and dangerous territory,

with teacher and support staff pay and pension worse than the state sector. A concern not just for the staff, but for parents too.

Of course, we acknowledge there are many good employers in the sector. If they weren't already, they will become employers of choice and increasingly have their pick of talented staff. But there is a growing divide.

You only need to cast your minds back a few years for the current wave of strike action in the sector to have been simply unimaginable. Now it is commonplace.

To substantiate this, in the last couple of months, in schools from Birkenhead to Worcestershire, Macclesfield to Hertfordshire, NEU members, with strong formal strike mandates, have successfully defeated employer proposals to leave the TPS, or cut employees' pay to pay for it.

We commend those schools who have made a commitment to stay in the TPS and keep it open for future

teachers, and pledged that there will be no pay cut or future pay freeze.

The increased activity, growing NEU membership, and developing consciousness, is being felt in other areas.

There is now a growing trend for independent school NEU members to submit an annual pay claim.

Support staff are also looking to organise to improve pay and conditions.

This Easter, NEU Annual Conference endorsed a motion from sector activists calling for a support staff campaign in the independent sector.

On 27 April, at a meeting of the independent sector National Council, NEU launched a campaign to improve the pay and conditions for independent sector support staff.

NEU school reps will be organising meetings for support staff in their school, with the intention of recruiting new members and identifying local campaign issues.



While there has been a significant increase in employer contribution to the TPS, our members know from looking at their school accounts, that it remains affordable for the vast majority.

There are many good independent sector employers. Many committed to staying in the TPS. Many seek to offer fair cost of living increases. However, there are those making a choice to try to cut staff remuneration. In these schools, the voices of those warning of "financial and political headwinds" seem to have drowned out the educationalists that know a school's most valuable asset is its staff.

Cutting pay and pensions; renegeing on contracts of employment; and paying less than the state sector. This will not be easily forgotten.

Meet the author

Patron of Reading at Leighton Park School, Berkshire, author Steve Cole, has been at the school for a Meet the Author event. 323 Year 4 and 5 children and their teachers from eight primary and prep schools across Berkshire attended.

Steve Cole is known for his children's books, including the popular 'Astrosaurus', 'Cows in Action' and 'Young Bond' series.

During the event, pupils had the opportunity to interact with Steve Cole, where in between bouts of laughter at Steve's numerous digressions, they could ask questions, share their thoughts, and gain insights into the creative process behind crafting compelling stories. Cole also shared anecdotes from his own journey as a writer,

inspiring students to explore their own creativity and pursue their passion for storytelling.

Joining the event were local schools New Christchurch Primary, Whiteknights Primary, Christ the King Primary, Ridgeway Primary, Whitley Park Primary, St Piran's Prep School, Caversham School and Hemdean House.

Steve Cole has been the School's Patron of Reading since 2019, engaging thousands of children over the last four years. Steve will be concluding his role this summer as Librarian, Grace Ritchie, gets ready to welcome a new author into the role. They will be announced at the launch of the new whole School Library in September.



Pictured: Students from the visiting schools with Steve Cole



Children's Book Project

Teaching, catering, support staff, governors and the Headmaster from West House School, West Midlands, have taken part in the Great Birmingham Run to help raise awareness of their official school charity, the Children's Book Project.

The school has been working closely with the Children's Book Project to establish a South Birmingham collection and distribution hub.

In collaboration with the Preparatory School girls of Edgbaston High School, the project has already enabled the distribution of hundreds of books to primary schools across the city this summer term.

Pictured: Staff ready for the Great Birmingham Run

One in three disadvantaged children across the UK has fewer than ten books of their own at home, and one in ten has none. The Children's Book Project seeks to give every child the opportunity to own their own book, empowering children to choose a book they are motivated to read.

West House is now an official drop-off point for people to donate 'gently loved' books. With the help of staff and children from EHS Prep School and West House School, together with the Children's Book Project, 1,500 books have already been gifted to three primary schools in South Birmingham.



Student scene-writing competition for English Literature students launched

As part of their Lit in Colour campaign, supporting UK schools to make the teaching and learning of English more inclusive, Bloomsbury publishing are inviting all English Literature students aged 13-19 to write their own short play scene on the theme of Belonging.

Book prize bundles and a chance to perform it live at two events this year will be awarded to 3 winning play scenes.

Entries need to be in by 31st May so go get your students writing this week!

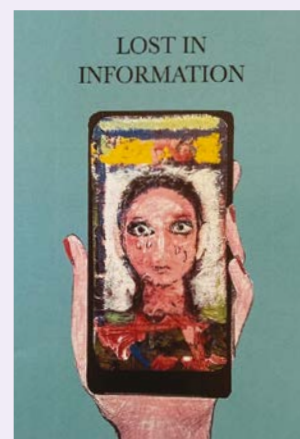
Find out more at www.bloomsbury.com/LitinColour

LOST IN INFORMATION

A cautionary tale about the danger of the digital deluge but also a guide to finding a journey back to yourself.

In a world overflowing with pings, swipes, and notifications, the alluring glow of smartphones threatens to drown an entire generation in digital deluge. 'LOST IN INFORMATION' unveils through the medium of art, the harmful, and often sinister ways our devices hijack our focus, distort reality, and pull us away from genuine human connections.

But amidst this modern quagmire, there is hope. Gently be inspired to reconnect with yourself on a deeper level by diving into the rejuvenating power of meditation. Uncover the secrets to reclaiming your



concentration, revitalising your interactions, and rebalancing your life.

This is not just a cautionary tale – it is a guide to rekindling the sparks of genuine living in a world that has become overwhelmed by screens.

Available on Amazon:

www.amazon.co.uk/Lost-Information-Astrid-Iverslien/dp/1399966146

Merger to form new education group

Hertfordshire schools, St Albans High School for Girls (STAHS), STAHS Prep and Stormont School are to merge in September to form the St Albans Education Group.

The schools have enjoyed a decades-long relationship, and the merger provides a new opportunity to further develop the already close ties through a more formal partnership, widening opportunities for all three schools.

The new group will be led by STAHS current head, Amber Waite, Head of STAHS since 2019, as founding principal.

She will be supported by Drew Thomson-Jones as Acting Head of Senior, Mike Bryant who will continue as Head of STAHS Prep and Louise Martin, who will remain as Head of Stormont School.

Louise Martin commented: "This is an exciting new chapter in both our schools' histories. At a time when independent schools face greater challenges than ever before, we are bringing together two similar institutions to operate under one umbrella, sharing support, expertise and resources to continue, and continue to improve,

the outstanding educational opportunities we deliver for all our pupils."

Amber Waite, who takes up her role in September, added: "With both STAHS and Stormont in good financial health, the St Albans Education Group's focus will be on the development of a new, group-wide development strategy to ensure that each school continues to offer a world-class girls' education in purpose-built facilities that support academic, social, and co-curricular development and all-round wellbeing."



Pictured: St Albans High School for Girls



Pictured: STAHS Prep



Pictured: Stormont School

Move to co-education



The Abingdon Foundation, which comprises Abingdon School and Abingdon Prep School, Oxfordshire has announced that both its schools are to become co-educational.

Abingdon is one of the oldest boys' day and boarding schools in England, with origins dating back beyond 1256. Today, however, Abingdon's Governors and Leadership teams want the education they deliver to be reflective of modern society - one where equal opportunity for the sexes is promoted; and in which both girls and boys should be as ambitious as each other; as well as being in control of their own future success. They acknowledge that teamwork, emotional intelligence, mutual understanding and the ability to relate to others is better fostered in a co-educational environment

Pictured: Abingdon School

which more accurately reflects the conditions of real life.

In short, the decision to move to co-education has been driven by the belief that the best preparation for young people is to educate them alongside one another.

Chair of Governors, Professor Mike Stevens, said: "I am very excited by what this development will mean for the Abingdonians of the future. The Abingdon I have known has always been open to the opportunities that change can bring and our decision has been driven by what we think is best for education today."

Abingdon Prep School will admit girls to its Pre-Prep from September 2024; and to Years 3 to 6 from September 2025. Abingdon Senior School will admit girls to its 1st Year (Year 7) and Sixth Form (Year 12) from September 2026.

CHANGING FACES...

CHANGING PLACES...



Andrew Allman, will take over as headmaster at Lucton School, Herefordshire in September. He has been Head at Myddelton College, Denbighshire, in North Wales since 2019.

Andrew went to Shrewsbury School, going on to Durham University

where he gained a BA in Theology and a Masters in Education before joining the staff of Barnard Castle School in County Durham.

He then joined Myddelton College as Deputy Headmaster which had re-opened in 2016 in the buildings formerly occupied by Howell's School for Girls which had closed in 2013.



Terrington Hall Prep School, North Yorkshire, has announced the appointment of Huw Thomas as its new Head, from September.

Huw has 25 years' experience in independent education in both Prep and Senior boarding schools, and is currently Head of Prep at Plymouth College, Devon.

previously held leadership roles at Sherborne Prep School, Dorset, Housemaster at Glenalmond College, Perth, and multiple roles at Blundell's School, Devon.

Simon Kibler, the current headmaster, is leaving Terrington Hall this summer after four years in the role to take up a new position of Head of King's Ely Prep in Cambridgeshire.



The Governors of The Leys and St Faith's Schools Foundation, Cambridgeshire, have announced the appointment of Dr Clare Ives to succeed Martin Priestley as Head of The Leys when he retires after almost twelve years of service in September 2025.

Dr Ives will be the school's first female Head.

Currently the Senior Deputy Head at Sevenoaks School, Kent, Dr Ives was previously a Boarding Housemistress, the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead and a former Head of History at Canford School, Dorset.



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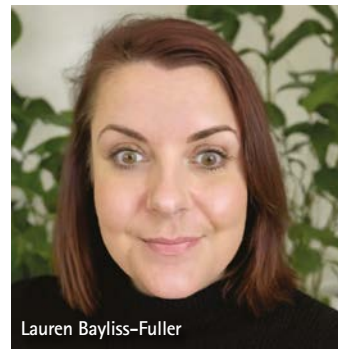
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From classroom to community – pupil volunteering

Why is it so important for pupils to volunteer? Head of Futures at Royal Hospital School, Suffolk, Lauren Bayliss-Fuller, explores the ripple effect of volunteering, and looks at how this can benefit pupils future careers as well as schools.



Lauren Bayliss-Fuller

Encouraging pupil volunteering is more than just a checkbox on the school's to-do list. It's about instilling values of social responsibility, cultivating essential life skills, and valuing a sense of community within the school environment. At Royal Hospital School (RHS), we believe in the transformative power of service, and our commitment to volunteering runs deep within our educational ethos.

As such volunteering is an integral part of our pupils' educational journey. It is important to encourage this activity from early years to sixth form, and present pupils with diverse opportunities to serve their school and wider community. Volunteering at RHS can range from service in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) to practical projects in departments such as Art, Media, Religion, Drama, Science and Music via the RHS Service programme. These service

experiences contribute positively to pupils' personal growth.

Collaborations between schools, community partners, and pupils themselves, can create volunteering partnerships. It's important to give pupils independence so that they can plan and organise voluntary opportunities themselves. We also help pupils secure volunteering opportunities, through guidance and signposting to relevant websites and organisations, as well as helping pupils to develop CVs and applications.

How does volunteering benefit pupils?

Encouraging pupils to volunteer creates a sense of social responsibility, instilling values of empathy, compassion and civic engagement from a young age. It also offers pupils the opportunity to develop practical skills such as leadership, communication,

teamwork, and problem-solving, which are essential for success in both academic and professional endeavours.

At RHS, we've had several pupils succeed through volunteering. Bea C, a Year 13 student, has volunteered for four years as an Animal Care Assistant. She has a variety of responsibilities including animal care as well as helping visitors to meet and groom the animals. Bea's voluntary work has added strength to her university applications – she is looking to become a Veterinary Nurse and courses require at least four weeks' of experience. Bea has been able to demonstrate her passion for working with animals and a genuine commitment to this career path.

Volunteering can also expose pupils to diverse experiences and settings, allowing them to explore different interests and passions beyond the classroom curriculum. Through volunteering, pupils experience personal growth as they gain confidence, resilience and a sense of purpose, contributing to their overall well-being and self-esteem. It also provides hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that complement classroom education, reinforcing concepts taught in school and embedding a deeper understanding of real-world issues.

Sophie W, another Year 13 student, volunteered for a not-for-profit foot care clinic for the elderly and disabled, for seven weeks last summer. This opportunity helped her decide to pursue a career as a GP. She said the experience also helped improve her university application. This shows the importance of encouraging volunteering for pupils as they can gain experiences which improve their skills for their futures.

Benefitting the local community through volunteering

The benefit of volunteering is not limited to the personal development and career prospects of our pupils, volunteering and service also has a major impact on the local community. It connects pupils with

their local communities, encouraging them to become active participants in addressing social challenges and making a positive impact on society.

When pupils volunteer, they contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of their communities, creating a ripple effect of positive change that benefits everyone. Volunteering exposes pupils to diverse perspectives and lived experiences, developing empathy, understanding and respect for others from different backgrounds and circumstances.

The habit of volunteering cultivated in school often extends into adulthood, shaping pupils into responsible, compassionate citizens who continue to give back to their communities throughout their lives. The Office for National Statistics also reports that volunteering can have a positive impact on individual well-being, with volunteers experiencing higher levels of life satisfaction and happiness compared to non-volunteers. Whilst we recognise how volunteering can help with career development, it's endearing to know that 46% of volunteers do it because they want to help people and make improvements.

We have several RHS staff who also volunteer, taking on roles such as school governors, trustees and mentors. Engaging in volunteering, outside of their professional roles, they model the values of service and social responsibility to pupils.

Conclusion

A culture of service within the school environment empowers pupils to become active contributors to their communities, preparing them for future success whilst having the feel-good factor. Through diverse volunteering opportunities, pupils develop essential life skills, explore their passions, and make a positive impact on the world around them. As educators, it's our responsibility to cultivate this culture of service and provide pupils with the support and resources they need to thrive as compassionate and responsible global citizens.

English Irregular Verbs

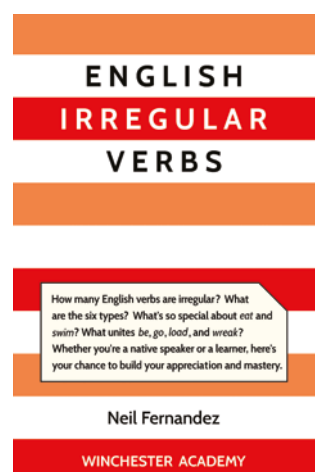
– published by Winchester Academy, 259pp, 2024

HOME-EDUCATED Arran Fernandez took his maths GCSE at five. At 15, he went up to Cambridge. At 18, he was Senior Wrangler.

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Music: Taking a new approach

Having joined Woodbridge School, Suffolk as Director of Music recently, Jonathan Woodley, discusses how teaching composition can encourage students to be free-spirited in their approach to music and in their exploration of creativity.

It's been said, that you cannot teach creativity – and we're not suggesting that is true or untrue – but you can certainly inspire and encourage it!

Giving students the confidence to be free-spirited in their approach to music, to try a new instrument and not to be isolated to the one(s) they've become, or are learning to become, experts in, to attend co-curricular clubs such as band club, composing music for film, to many others that enable them to take themselves out of their comfort zone allows them to stretch themselves and their talents, but more importantly their thoughts, feelings and passion for music. Alongside all of these different activities, at least one of the focuses in school and lessons should be on teaching composition in terms of encouraging and exploring creativity. After all, it is the creation of music, where better to begin?

The journey of music at Woodbridge School

If "Music is the universal language of mankind" as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, then we must begin with the sounds, characters and building blocks of that language – and for music that begins with composition.

While it is clearly imperative students are encouraged to share and demonstrate their own learnings of their chosen instruments, spending time ensuring that each and every one of them has basic, practical skills on keyboards, percussion and guitar from Year 7, means they can use these transferrable skills to compose; this is something we feel passionately about and work hard to achieve and something we recognise isn't always taught or even reinforced in key stages 2, 3 or 4.

Encouraging a free, exploratory approach to composition ensures students are given the opportunity to really and truly 'play' and explore how the different elements of music

can be manipulated to create mood. Adopting and using loop-based software tools in the classroom means students are also able to consider the use of those elements, and perhaps more importantly, learn not to be restricted by their own practical abilities.

Experimenting with styles

As they progress through school, those developed practical skills can then be used to continue through to composition. Experimenting with various styles such as Indian Ragas or the Blues for example, encourages refinement of improvisation, and this is ultimately channeling melodic composition. As part of lessons as well as offering through co-curricular clubs, we find that demonstrating how these skills transfer to the real world is invaluable – and inspiring!

For example, by studying film music, we're able to offer insight and inspiration into and for composition projects; hearing and feeling how music influences emotions is pivotal in any part of music tuition, but using instances that students can relate to easily and draw upon experiences from, truly brings the subject and our students to life! Spending time working to produce pieces of composition to chosen film scenes is an invaluable part of lessons at our school – not only does this underpin lessons learned, it's fun and relatable and for some of our students it's a career path they're now or have already been considering.

Analysing music that's enjoyed and appreciated, using the knowledge gained through Years 7 and 8, our Year 9 students begin to compose music in preferred genres. For example, Grunge, EDM (Electronic Dance Music) and other modern musical styles.

As their skills, talent and creativity become more sophisticated, so does the software that we introduce and

use in lessons, forever stretching these young musicians, their talents, their capabilities and their belief in themselves – mostly because they enjoy what they're learning and they can see the trajectory of their skills if they continue to focus on composition alongside all other elements they are learning.

By developing a preferred approach to composition, such as improvisatory or theoretical, students can use metacognition to reflect and then choose software and/or approaches that match. This combined with their development of analytical skills they're able to combine inspirations from various composers and/or pieces too.

To inspire and instill

The ultimate end game of all of this could be said to be that prized GCSE, and of course, indeed, this is always (part of) the case. But for our students we hope to inspire and instill curiosity and courage, through the learning and development obtained focusing on composition alongside practical and theory studies, their appreciation and enjoyment are increased and both of these most definitely affect



Jonathan Woodley

all other parts of their learning – and not just in music.

From the beginning of human history, we have created and enjoyed melodies and rhythms. Many of the same parts of our brain are used to process music and language, so it's little wonder that it has the impact it has – whether learning or hearing it. Music enhances general performance in other subjects in school, benefiting learning by activating all areas of the brain from sound processing to rhythm processing and emotions. Teaching music is a passion and joy of mine, and ultimately the main reason I do so is to instill those thoughts and feelings, enjoyment and appreciation in every student. My belief is by instilling composition from as early as possible, we are giving young people not only the tools but the opportunities they need to explore music further, and to see that they are usually capable of much more than they think they are.

Les Misérables

After waiting years for a suitable opportunity to showcase both boys and girls, Leweston School, Dorset students have taken to the stage with *Les Misérables* for their annual production.

The combined efforts of pupils and staff culminated in a display of dramatic and musical talent that was well-received by audiences over three nights.

Performances were given by Oliver D as Jean Valjean, Henry B as Javert, and Kiran J as Marius, while Jasmine A and Serena M as Fantine and Cosette equally

Pictured: Students in *Les Misérables*



matched their male counterparts. And two of the youngest performers, Alfie AB and Scarlett R, embraced their roles of Gavroche and Young Cosette to become role models for those waiting in the wings for their chance to take the spotlight.



‘Give us a Clue’

Years 9 and 10 from RGS Worcester have put on a production of ‘Clue: High School Edition’, adapted from the 1985 film and based on the Cluedo board game.

Set in a mansion filled with colourful characters, secrets, and plenty of comedic chaos, the tale begins when six mysterious guests assemble for an unusual dinner party where murder and blackmail are on the menu.

As so many students wanted to be involved two different casts were created, performing on alternate nights under the direction of Mr

Pictured: Pupils perform ‘Clue’

Jak Garrity, Teacher of Drama.

He commented: “As a dedicated fan of both the iconic board game Cluedo (on which the film and play ‘Clue’ are based) and the 1980s film adaptation, it has been a joy collaborating with pupils to bring this classic tale to life on stage. I have had the pleasure of watching them embrace the absurdity of the script and bring their own unique flair to each character...”

‘Clue’ is one of four performances staged by RGS Worcester’s Drama department this academic year.

Vocal programme development

St Mary’s Music School, Edinburgh, has launched two full time vocal programmes which will focus on age-appropriate vocal development, the Changing Voices Programme for pupils aged 13-15 and the Senior Vocal Programme for pupils aged 15-19.

Aimed at aspiring young singers, the Changing Voices Programme will focus on classical vocal technique, supporting singers to maintain confidence in their vocal ability through specialist classes and teaching on how to use their new voices.

Pupils on the Changing Voices Programme will be given an increased amount of contact

Pictured: Pupil at St Mary’s Music School



time on their second studies to allow them flexibility within their education as their voice develops.

The Senior Vocal Programme has been designed to provide young singers with all the skills they need to succeed at conservatoire and beyond.

Best foot forward!

The Upper School student dance team from ACS International School Hillingdon, Middlesex, have returned victorious from the UK-wide Prestige Dance Competition, held in Canterbury.

The dance team, made up of students from Grades 5 to 10 (aged 10 – 16 years old), finished the competition having claimed nine trophies, as well as some high ranking runner-up finishes.

Students Emma, Charlie and

Cecilia secured first place for their solo contributions, with Cecilia also placing first in a duet with dance partner, Alicia. As a team, the dancers’ achievements also included two first and two second place finishes. Throughout the competition, teams were judged by industry professionals and competed against some of the country’s leading dance and performing art schools.

Clarinet quintet



The clarinet quintet from Taunton School, Somerset, are celebrating after reaching the national finals of the Pro Corda Schools’ Chamber Music Festival.

The Year 9 and 10 students which made up the quintet progressed through the regional round and the semi-final where they were selected as one of five finalists.

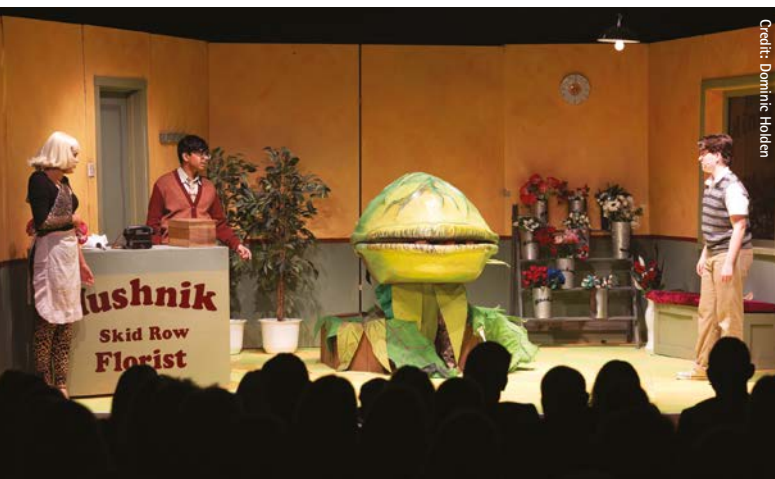
The final, held at Central Foundation Boys’ School in Central London, saw the quintet perform

Pictured: Taunton School Quintet

Paul Reade’s Victorian Kitchen Garden Suite.

The national annual competition is organised by Pro Corda, a charity which exists to provide for and conduct the education of young people and others in music with a particular focus on chamber music. Pro Corda is led by concert pianist Andrew Quartermain and this year’s competition adjudicator was Dr Evan Rothstein, Deputy Head of Strings at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Little Shop of Horrors



Credit: Dominic Holden

Over three nights, a cast of Senior School pupils from Bolton School Boys’ and Girls’ Divisions, Lancashire, delivered a performance of Alan Menken and Howard Ashman’s Little Shop of Horrors.

Rehearsing over a period of six months, including five Sundays, the cast perfected their interpretation of this take on the Faust legend.

Director of Theatre Studies in the Girls’ Division, Miss Sarah Talbot, said: “The cast have taken risks and

Pictured: Little Shop of Horrors at Bolton School

problem solved, building character at every turn. None of this would have been possible without the support of committed professionals. We would like to thank all who played in the band and express our gratitude to Mark Beaumont from North West Theatre Arts Company for lending and installing the set and puppets. We are also indebted to two technicians Mr Kyle and Mr Deakin. Little Shop of Horrors was Mr Kyle’s last senior production at Bolton School.”

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Acquisition

Chatsworth Schools has welcomed Da Vinci International School Antwerp (DVIS) as a member of its international division, Blenheim Schools. DVIS becomes the 18th school in the Chatsworth Schools' global family.

DVIS is an international school set in the heart of Antwerp, Belgium with over forty student nationalities. It has become the first school in mainland Europe

to join the Blenheim Schools' family, and by being accredited for International Baccalaureate MYP and DP and in the accreditation stage for the PYP – DVIS also becomes the first IB school in the Chatsworth and Blenheim Schools' family.

DVIS was founded by Ms Ilse De Souter 27 years ago who remains DVIS Principal.



Pictured: Anita Gleave, Chatsworth and Blenheim Schools' Founder and CEO and Ilse de Souter DVIS, Founder and Principal



Expansion

Independent education provider, Dukes Education, has further expanded its family of schools with Prague-based Consilium.

Founded in 2012, Consilium is an education group of eight settings across the Czech Republic, Croatia and Spain, with 250 staff serving more than 1,500 students. The group is made up of three American Academies in Prague, Brno and Zagreb, plus a local

curriculum school, three bilingual nursery and junior schools, and an educational consultancy all based in Prague, and a British school in Spain, located between Barcelona and Valencia.

Consilium's leadership and operational frameworks remain unchanged and Ondrej Kania, the founder of Consilium, will continue as a pivotal figure in the organisation.

Pictured: Consilium American Academy in Prague

New sites in Middle East



Ellesmere College, Shropshire, will see Ellesmere College Riyadh in Saudi Arabia open to its first pupils in September 2024 – one year since the opening of Ellesmere Muscat in the capital city of Oman.

It will be followed by a new site in Doha, Qatar, which is nearing completion.

The latest site in the capital of Saudi Arabia caters for local and international students and has opened in partnership with the Glory & Princeton International Schools Group – a group that started in 2003 and now owns and operates 15 schools across the region.


The Glory Group was started by Dr Hamdi Abel Razek Ahmed and his

Pictured: Ellesmere College Riyadh School

wife and in addition to the schools it runs, the group is currently building a university in New Mansoura with eight specialist campuses.

Ellesmere College will work in close partnership with EC Riyadh but the Saudi Arabia campus will operate as an independent institution, with its own management teams and governing bodies – in exactly the same way as the Oman campus is run.

Ellesmere College is involved in setting standards and providing governance and oversight for all sites – and is in discussion with several other partners looking to expand the Ellesmere College family of schools into other territories around the world.





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International schools – their origin and influence

How has the international school sector developed? Educationalist, Andrew McEwen, takes a look at the historical context.



International schools have established a firm grip on what is often seen as the premium education provision in many countries. The reality that many, if not most of these schools operate as predominantly English-medium schools, albeit with significant local language and social studies classes, has represented a form of ‘soft’ power influence on the part of the British. A number of UK Independent schools have established satellite establishments in different parts of the world, while international schools groups have acquired UK independent schools. These synergies have provided both economic and pedagogical benefits. But what is the history to the development of the sector?

There is a lack of consensus as to the identity of the first international school. Some would suggest that this honour should go to The International College (also known as Spring Grove School) in Hounslow, London, which was formally opened by the future King Edward VII in July 1867. The school, whose official name was: London College of the International Education Society, was the brainchild of the politician Richard Cobden, the scientist Thomas Huxley and the novelist Charles Dickens, among others. Cobden was a leading advocate of free trade, and he regarded the new school, with its international mix of students, as a nursery for ‘ambassadors’ who would improve international understanding and thereby encourage the efficient flow of world trade.

The founders envisaged the International College as the springboard to the creation of a future network of schools, with similar institutions in France, Germany and Italy, all using the same curriculum so

that students could move easily between countries, acquiring new experiences, especially new languages, on the way. Before such a plan could become a reality the school closed in 1889, due mainly to the volatile political situation in Europe, especially the Franco-Prussian war. Although further, specifically denominated, international schools were not on the horizon at this time there was an increasing tendency for the wealthy and influential around the world to consider sending their children ‘abroad’.

Military action in Europe and beyond put a hold on international recruitment, especially to France, and on projects to found new international schools. This moratorium continued until shortly after the First World War when, in 1924, the International School of Geneva opened with 8 pupils and 3 teachers. Some six weeks later, on the other side of the world, the Yokohama International School opened, in a local YMCA building, with just 6 pupils and one teacher. Both schools were founded to meet the needs of growing expatriate communities, and both continue to operate to this day with, currently, 4,000 and 650 students respectively. A small number of similar schools opened in the years between the world wars, reflecting growing international mobility, but it was only after World War II that international schools began to proliferate.

The growth in international education and international schools, post-World War II, had, in part, its origins in the forward planning which was taking place from 1941 onwards. R.A. Butler, President of the British Board of Education, who was greatly concerned with post-war reconstruction on the continent, formalised this gathering into the

Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) in November 1942. Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Yugoslavia and Britain were the first members. A resolution adopted in January 1943, called for a “United Nations Bureau for Educational Reconstruction” whose purpose would be to “meet urgent needs in the enemy-occupied countries”. With this, the USA joined the enterprise.

The USA’s presence was initially low key with only a junior, London-based diplomat, Richard A Johnson, maintaining observer status. Washington had begun to grow uncomfortable with the ‘overly aggressive’ British leadership in the creation of the new educational and cultural organisation, and so, senior politicians of the stature of Congressman J. William Fulbright and the Assistant Secretary of State, Archibald MacLeish, among others, were given instructions to participate ‘fully’ in CAME’s efforts to sketch out a constitution for the new organisation. In 1945 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established with its headquarters in Paris. Archibald MacLeish contributed the following to the introduction of its charter: “Since wars begin in the minds of men it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”.

Marie-Therese Maurette, the then Director of the International School of Geneva, began promoting the need for “International-mindedness”. She posited the idea that this was a concept which needed to be ‘taught rather than caught’. Among her proposals, was for a new ‘World History’ course; insistence on pupils learning a second language and participation in some form of community service.

By 1951 a small group of headteachers volunteered to form the Conference of Internationally Minded Schools, which came together with other similarly interested bodies and enlisted UNESCO backing, combined with the support of staff, parents and governors of the International School of Geneva and the United Nations International School in New York. This initiative was formalised with the founding of the International Schools Association (ISA).

Schools affiliated to ISA shared the aim of ‘educating young people to be at home in the world anywhere’ (Leach, 1969). Leach believed the school where he taught, the International School of Geneva, to be the ‘only’ true international school at that time, and even that school had, in his perception, ‘too much Swiss influence, too many British staff and too many American students’. Some consider Leach’s vision to have been unrealistic, with many researchers and practitioners in the field of international education taking a more pragmatic view, accepting the ‘inevitability’ that the local composition of the expatriate community, which continues to be top-heavy with anglophone members and teachers, will determine a major part of the make-up of any school’s student body.

From these early steps, the International Schools sector began its steady rise to where it is today with over 10,000 international schools worldwide. Whilst most operate in their own way, they share many commonalities in their approach, this in great part due to work undertaken by the first visionaries.

Andrew McEwen MA, FRSA, has been Director and Chairman of IES (International Education Systems Limited) responsible for the development of schools in new markets, and Trustee and Director of three independent schools in the UK and two in South Africa, and is a member of BELMAS (British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society). He has also served on the Board of ISA (The International Schools Association) and the Advisory Board for the MA programme in International Education at NHLStenden University in the Netherlands. For nearly 20 years he has worked as a partner with National School Transfer where he helps buyers and sellers achieve their goals in the schools acquisition market.

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New beginnings – the transition from primary to secondary education and why it really matters

With the new academic year only months away, bringing change for many children moving from primary to secondary schooling, how can schools help and support these pupils? Head of Lower School at Solihull School, West Midlands, Michael Gledhill, outlines the approach they have taken as a school.



Michael Gledhill

“Change”, as Heraclitus famously stated, “is the only constant.” In the context of education, this translates to the inevitable progression from primary to secondary schooling which biologically and physiologically can coincide with a period of profound transformation for children. The differences between an end of Year 9 (aged 14) child and an end of Year 6 (aged 11) child can be stark. It is therefore crucial that a school’s approach to transitioning pupils from Year 6 into Year 7 and beyond is as positive and child-centered as possible. At Solihull School we embrace this change, not merely as a logistical step, but as an opportunity for intellectual and personal growth.

Sow seeds early

Taking the time to get to know one another as early as possible is a simple yet key milestone in any relationship. We interview every pupil who meets the academic requirements of the 11+ examination to get to know what their passions and curiosities are, whether that be pupils from our own Preparatory School or pupils from other schools in the Solihull, Warwickshire and wider West Midlands area. This September, we welcome pupils from over 40 different primary and prep schools.

Team around the child

As Head of Lower School (leadership of Years 7 – 9), I am fortunate to have two dedicated Deputy Heads of Lower School; one with a core focus on transition and one as our expert safeguarding lead for the 460+ pupils in the section. From taster days for prospective families

to a ‘Congratulations Evening’ in January to showcase the school, through to bespoke events for key partner schools, leading to our ‘Welcome Evening’ in the summer term culminating in the ‘Transition Day’ the following week, our aim via the Head of Year, tutors and House captains is to create a pastoral and welfare structure such that pupils feel like they have already joined the school before the summer break. Of course, in September, we hold it dear that before any other year group returns, our new Third Form pupils, in bright new uniform and equipment, enjoy the campus to themselves to make more bonds and have their first assembly together. For pupils who may find change more challenging, we help identify such pupils sooner rather than later and run Transition+ on an individual basis to smooth the path wherever possible.

Belonging

A fundamental principle of Maori culture is ‘whakapapa’ – placing oneself in a wider context of those that have gone before and will come after you. Founded in 1560, there are hundreds of thousands of Old Silhillians. Incoming Year 7 (Third Form) pupils this September will leave school aged 18 in 2031. A new cohort of Third Form pupils will start in September 2031 and so on. Understanding what has gone before for our pupils and what is to come really helps them feel part of a wider family, ever ready to wrap their arms around one another.

Pupils in the Third Form undertake a bespoke period on their timetable – ‘Greyhound lessons’, the name

reflecting part of the school’s emblem. During these lessons with their tutor, pupils learn about transition matters such as evolving friendships, safe and responsible use of smartphones and enjoy a dedicated visit to our Denis Tomlin Archive Room – a Solihull School ‘museum’ – with our school Archivist.

Transition as an ongoing process

Naturally, the efforts to ensure pupils and parents are smoothly woven into the fabric of our school do not stop come September of a new school year. It is vital that transition is seen as a nurturing, slow-burn activity. From running pupil voice forums, questionnaires, year group tutor feedback, monitoring co-curricular engagement and so much more, we are able to run tutor-parent evenings in the first half-term where pupil, parent and tutor voice can all be heard to celebrate successes and build on areas of development.

For pupils who are finding the jump from primary to secondary school more daunting socially, our Circle of Friends forum enables pupils to engage with others in the same boat to not feel so much like an island. A cohort of Sixth Form students are trained peer mentors who can also help our younger pupils by relating to and reflecting on the transition experience as they stood in Third Form shoes not so long ago.

Parental engagement – the key link

99% of secondary schools are larger than primaries. Parents of Year 6 children may well be used to meeting their child’s teacher at the gate each morning and afternoon in July,

then come September their child is now becoming more independent navigating different classrooms in a day plus new music lessons, new clubs to enjoy and certainly more after-school opportunities. As well as a stand-alone parent & tutor meeting in October of the new year, connecting with parents on the touchline of a weekend, in the audience at the St Cecilia music concert and arranging parental lunches to experience part of their child’s day (plus so much more!) are all parts of the transition toolkit. By the summer of the first year, primary school seems a fond but distant memory. Our thriving Parents’ Association also allows parents in our community to engage in social events with a common cause.

Finally, never stop learning

Whilst transition has been important since our education system was formed, it’s clear that the pandemic left all schools needing to innovate to help support this rite of passage. Whilst those days are gladly behind us, our learning point was to have that same drive to constantly reflect on what year on year could be even better for transition. This September we look forward to welcoming a specialist team building provider to Solihull for our Third form pupils to enjoy on campus in the first two weeks of term. Heraclitus may not have known the intricacies of secondary school education but we certainly note his counsel.



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A partnership that's more than just football

The rise in popularity of football within the independent sector has coincided with the meteoric rise of women's football and a significant cultural shift within the professional game itself. Head of Rossall School, Lancashire, Jeremy Quartermain, explores how the school's new partnership with Manchester City shows the way independent schools can benefit from embracing the beautiful game.



Jeremy Quartermain

The announcement of our exciting new partnership with Manchester City was the culmination of discussions that had taken place between the club and the school over the course of many months. From the beginning, we agreed any partnership must constitute much more than a loose association with occasional visits from scouts or the odd invitation to watch a game. It soon became very clear we share similar educational values. Of course, we want to run a programme that develops athletic and technical skills but, above all else, we are committed to inspiring young people to become outstanding in every regard.

What has emerged from this creative dialogue, is a programme that will see Manchester City coaching staff located permanently here at school. They will lead on all aspects of coaching while working closely alongside our own highly experienced staff to ensure what

we offer is truly world class. Our elite football programme (with its various strands) is designed to ensure fantastic opportunities for personal development within the context of an intellectually stimulating and culturally enriching school environment. Students on the programme have access to sports psychologists, physiotherapists, nutritional advice, one-to-one coaching and much more. Pupils also study alongside those who wish to pursue medicine at Oxbridge or head off to some of the UK's top music conservatoires. They are encouraged to engage with a world beyond sport and we believe very firmly that skills such as resilience, leadership, self-discipline, teamwork and critical reflection are transferable between pitch and classroom.

Some programmes constitute little more than branding agreements whilst others focus purely upon the development of footballing skills. Such approaches run the

risk of being tokenistic and one dimensional. We aim to inspire young people to become athletes who strive for success on the pitch but who are also open to watching a ballet or the Royal Shakespeare Company perform. The programme is there for those who want to take their skills to the very highest level without losing what it is to be human in the round.

We have run an elite football programme for a number of years and we have enjoyed significant success on the national stage. We regularly reach the final stages of national competitions and our U18 girls' team have been ISFA champions for two out of the last three years. Some of our students earn professional contracts whilst others head off to the United States on full scholarships. However, others find their engagement with the programme leads them to explore opportunities they had never considered. It is not at all unusual for our top sports stars to head off to universities such as Oxford, Edinburgh or Imperial College to study subjects as diverse as natural sciences and economics. Single-mindedness is important for athletes but it is something of a misnomer to suggest that elite level performance means jettisoning every other aspect of life.

Independent schools are ideally set up to nurture the development of top athletes and we can do so from a holistic perspective few other educational institutions are able to emulate. It has been interesting to observe the evolution and development of the academy structure within clubs. It is my

contention that professional football clubs can learn a good deal from the best of our schools, but we too can learn a huge amount from a club like Manchester City.

Our children have been inspired by the success of the Lionesses. Players such as Fran Kirby and Steph Houghton are relatable and children engage with their personal stories. Determination, courage, compassion and resilience are modelled superbly well by some of our top players. Today's players are increasingly reflective and often choose to engage with aspects of life far removed from the game. Think of Marcus Rashford's highly effective campaigning on the issue of childhood poverty. In any case the modern game requires superb analytical skills and a willingness to engage with many aspects of sports science.

Rossall is a centre of excellence for a number of sports. We invest an enormous amount of time in creating highly effective programmes for the sports stars of the future. Our sports department embraces a spirit of inclusivity. We believe all our children will benefit from our partnership with Manchester City, whose presence will serve to inspire a professional and competitive approach that is applicable to educational and sporting endeavours beyond football.

On a personal level, I have felt inspired by visiting the Etihad training ground in Manchester and meeting with our partners. I am delighted our children can now benefit from Manchester City's outstanding quality of coaching and football philosophy.



Credit: Anthony Ferran, Rossall School

Pictured (l to r): Campbell Reid and Maya Hansen (Rossall School students), Bailey Whalley (MCFC Coach) and Tom Russell (MCFC Coach)

Cross Country Championships



Pupils from Dame Bradbury's Junior School, Essex, represented the Uttlesford district at the Essex Primary Cross Country Championships, securing great placements throughout, alongside a victory.

Following the team's victories at the Saffron Walden and Uttlesford District rounds, the

Pictured: Dame Bradbury's Runners at Essex Championships

Dame Bradbury's pupils travelled to Garon Park in Southend to take their places on the start line.

Amongst the standout performances from the pupils were solo runner Ruby who secured first place in the Year 3 Girl's race. The Year 5 Girls team also secured the County Team title.



GB padel team

The Head of Tennis from Ashville College, Yorkshire, has joined the GB padel team hoping to reign in the International Padel Federation's Seniors World Championships taking place in Spain.

Sophie Cousins joins fellow Wetherby Padel Club coach Angela Crossley on the 16-strong team competing in the sport, thought to have originated in Mexico in the late 1960s, getting off to a great start beating Norway 6-7, 6-2, 6-4.

A cross between tennis and squash, padel is played on an enclosed court with playable walls. The balls

are softer than those used in tennis and racquets are usually solid rather than strunged.

One big difference to tennis is that the serve must be below waist height.

The sport is now the second most popular in Spain, second only to football. However, its international popularity grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic as it's possible to play indoors and with no physical contact. Today, an estimated 25 million players participate in over 90 countries.

Pictured: Ashville's Sophie Cousins (left) and Angela Crossley, currently representing Team GB in the Padel Federation's Seniors World Championships in Spain



Girls' football

Leighton Park School, Berkshire has become the first senior school to sign up to a new partnership with Her Game Too - a charity dedicated to the promotion of girls in sport.

The pupils and staff at Leighton Park will be supported by Her Game Too through educational pieces, tournament support and advice and guidance when needed.

Head of Football at Leighton Park School and creator of the YouHQ Girls' Summer Football league, Callum Beasley, commented: "Working with Her Game Too boosts our voice to encourage other communities to do more for

Pictured: Leighton Park Girls' footballers

equality in sport, push girls to be confident leaders and athletes and ensure others are changing the way they think about womens' football".

Since January the school has offered professional coaching delivered by Chelsea FC after school with the girls' football season supported throughout the summer term. 80 girls are now involved in the game. The school has also launched an exciting new girls' football league, sponsored by health and wellbeing platform, YouHQ, engaging girls' teams from 11 other local schools and promoting sport in the Reading area.

Director of Sports Academy

Haberdashers' Monmouth School has announced the appointment of former Wales scrum half, Richie Rees, as Director of the new Haberdashers' Monmouth School (HMS) Sports Academy.

Richie, capped nine times for Wales in Rugby Union, will join the school in July, from his current role as assistant coach at Cardiff Rugby, having previously coached the Tongan National team, managed the Cardiff and Dragons Rugby academy pathways and coached various Wales age group teams including its 7s side on the World Sevens Series.

As Director of the HMS Sports Academy, Richie will oversee the Eddie Butler Centre, a new sports and athletic performance facility opening in April 2025, develop and lead the HMS Sports Academy's strategy and the new sports scholarship scheme, whilst managing the sports performance pathways and strength and conditioning programmes.

Pictured: Richie Rees



In addition to heading up the Academy, Richie will undertake a mentoring role across all the school's sport programmes and assist the boys' rugby coaching at all age groups, whilst also launching a girls' rugby 7s provision within school which will be introduced from September, when the school goes fully co-educational.

School sport will continue to be run under the direction of Andy Jones as Director of Sport who will be working closely with Richie.

Golf champion

Year 6 pupil, Charlie Hedden from Shebbear College, Devon has become the Devon Schools Golf Champion 2024, after competing as part of the school golf team at the Golf Championship at Bigbury Golf Club.

It was the first time that Shebbear College entered the competition as a school, and it resulted with the Shebbear team of Billy, Alfie, Woody and Charlie being placed 3rd against 50 teams.

11-year-old Charlie, who is the youngest golfer in the team, went on to win the individual Competition. Up against students up to the age of 18, Charlie was drawing with another golfer at 45 points and it was his back nine that

Pictured: Charlie Hedden with his trophy



ended up winning the competition, right at the end of the day.

Charlie, who has only been playing golf for around 18 months, currently plays for Torrington, Royal North Devon, Portmore and Stover Golf Clubs, travelling across the South West to compete at the weekends.

Paris 2024 selection



Swimmer from Repton School, Derbyshire, Eva Okaro, has made history following her Team GB selection for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

At 17 years-old, she will be one of the youngest competitors at the games. Eva will also be the first ever swimmer to compete at the Olympics whilst still at Repton.

Eva secured her position in the squad after competing at the Aquatics GB Championships alongside 22 other members of Repton Swimming Club, setting a personal best time of 24.96 in the Women's 50m Freestyle to win a Silver Medal, behind 28-year-old Olympic and World medallist, Anna Hopkin. Eva also won Silver in the 100m Freestyle setting a personal best of 54.46 and was within the top four finishers for the relay selection.

At the end of 2023, Eva won gold in the 4x100m Freestyle at

Pictured: Eva Okaro

the Ontario Junior International and set a new European Junior record time in the 4x100m Mixed Medley. She has previously represented Great Britain and England at junior level, at several international meets.

Austyn Manley at 13 was the youngest male swimmer at the Aquatics GB Championships and he came away with a new British Age Group Record of 2:07.62 in the 200m Backstroke.

Other Repton School pupils to compete at the Aquatics GB Championships in a range of strokes and distances were: Annabel Crees, Cameron Jamieson, Connie Palmer, Ellie Broughton, Hannah Capron, Hannah Hodgkiss, Harriet Oxley, Holly Marshall, Holly Robinson, Izabella Okaro, Jessica Smelt, Laurie Devine, Leo Pollock, Lydia Cordle, Mabli Collyer, and Maddie Emmet.

Pentathletes set to compete for GB

Three boys from Loughborough Grammar School, Leicestershire have competed in Laser run and triathlete competitions held at Leweston School, Dorset. With a biathle qualification already in the bag, the school had high hopes of making the Great Britain team for this multisport championship.

And their performances did not disappoint. Strong races saw all the boys gain qualifications in Laser run; and a silver medal by Oliver S saw a qualification in triathle, so they will be heading over to Madera for the European Championships later in the year.

Pictured: Ewan, Oliver and Alistair



The UIPM Multisport European Championships will take place in July. The Loughborough Grammar School Team Great Britain pentathlete selection is as follows:

- U13 – Alistair M
Biathle and Laser run
- U15 – Oliver S
Biathle, Triathle and Laser run
- U17 – Ewan M
Biathle and Laser run

Goodwood drive

Sixth former from Cranleigh School, Surrey, Jack Ruddell, was the youngest driver at the Goodwood 81st members meeting.

Already an experienced racer in the Civic Cup, Jack drove a 1965 Ford Mustang alongside British touring car champion, Tom Ingram, in the Ken Miles Cup – a two-driver, 45-minute race in honour of 60 years of the Mustang. Racing against many sporting legends and formula stars they finished in 8th place.

Pictured: Jack Ruddell at Goodwood



One of the youngest drivers in the Civic Cup championship, Jack will continue to race in the Civic Cup this year and was the fastest in pre-season testing.

National Golf achievement

Young golfers from Brentwood School, Essex, have clinched the Independent Schools National Golf Finals title at The Player's Club in Bristol securing the biggest prize in the school's golfing history.

Established in 2005 the Independent Schools Golf Association (ISGA) is the official Golf organisation for Independent Schools running a series of events throughout the UK.

130 independent schools entered this year's competition, with

Pictured (l to r): Edward Linley, Ethan Roos and Henry Linley – the Brentwood School championship winning team



18 reaching the national final. Brentwood's victory was the biggest golfing achievement in the history of the school.

Bumper football festival



The popularity of girls' football has seen an annual Football Festival dedicated to girls' football for local primary schools expand to three nights this year rather than the usual two. In total, 1200 young people took part in small-sided football games over the course of the event at Bolton School, Lancashire: 57 teams comprising of Year 3 and 4 pupils on night one; 62 girls' teams, 16 female referees and one WSL Everton Women's player on night two; and over 60 teams on the final evening of action, made up of 40 Year 5 and 6 teams in the A competition and 20 Year 5/6 teams in the B competition.

The event was attended by hundreds of families, provided much fun and also some serious competition. The girls' final saw schools St Andrew's Over Hulton

Pictured: The girls' trophy was shared by St Andrew's Over Hulton and Eatock after a draw in the final

draw 1-1 with Eatock and the teams deciding to share the trophy rather than go to sudden-death penalties. On the final match-day, Red Lane beat St Brendan's 2-1 in the A Competition final, whilst Egerton and Mytham competed in the B Competition final with Egerton running out 1-0 winners.

The Festival is organised by Keith Branagan, former Bolton Wanderers' goalkeeper and football coach at Bolton, along with the Bolton Sports Alliance. This year the games were refereed by players from Bolton School's Year 8, 9 and 10 football squads as well as volunteer girls from Ladybridge High School, Thornleigh and Bolton School Girls' Division. The event also runs courtesy of the Estates and Grounds teams at Bolton School and teaching staff.

Cricket success



Stonyhurst, Lancashire has announced that the St Mary's Hall girls' cricket team has triumphed at the Regional Indoor Cricket Competition, held at Bolton Arena.

Competing against 950 schools nationwide, the SMH girls emerged victorious, claiming the title of North of England champions for the first time in the school's history.

This success also secured them a

Pictured: The successful St Mary's Hall girls' cricket team

place in the Indoor National Final at Lord's Cricket Ground.

The team which comprised of Year 7 and 8 pupils, and led by the Director of Cricket, Francois Haasbroek, has seen an extensive winter nets programme designed to hone the individual bowling and batting techniques of every player to ensure they are match-ready for the summer season.

Primary Cross Country



St Margaret's School, Hertfordshire, has recently hosted the Hertfordshire Primary Cross Country Championships in association with HSAA (Hertfordshire Schools Athletics Association). It is the first time the school has hosted the sporting event, which is the main primary school county race in the region, also acting as a trial race for top athletes to try out to represent the county at the national championships. The event, which saw 438 Year 5 and Year 6 pupils compete and finish the course, involved four races, all spanning one mile in length.

Pictured: The cross country championships at St Margaret's School

A total of 69 schools from across Hertfordshire took part in the races, including Aldenham School, Codicote, Beechwood Park, and Berkhamsted Prep. The circuit, a mixture of terrains, included a challenging woodland element, making the course a test of endurance for the runners.

The four races comprised of Year 6 boys, Year 6 girls and Year 5 boys and Year 5 girls. At the end of each race, the winners were awarded with a gold county medal, while the runners who finished second to tenth were awarded a county certificate for their achievements.

European Fencing Championships

Year 7 pupil from Stephen Perse Cambridge Senior School, Rose Raju, has returned from Ciudad Real, Spain with both an individual and team Silver Medal for England, in the European Fencing Confederation (EFC) U14 Women's Foil competition.

Having first been introduced to fencing in Year 2 at the Junior School and after just two years of intermediate to advance level fencing with her local club, Cambridge Sword, 11-year-old Rose was the youngest competitor to be selected for the England U14 fencing team competing at the European tournament.

In her short fencing career, Rose has managed to catch up with many seasoned fencers, having won the Championship for the U12 Women's Foil category at the Eastern Region Qualifiers earlier this year. At number 19, Rose

Pictured: Rose Raju



is currently the highest ranked England fencer in the European rankings for the Women's U14 Foil.

Rose is looking forward to competing next at the British Youth Championships in Sheffield this summer, along with two other students from Stephen Perse Cambridge Senior School, Loic and Jerome.

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Among the upcoming head and principal appointments:

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Gateway School	Buckinghamshire
Leicester Grammar School	Leicestershire
Notting Hill and Ealing High School	London
Polwhele House Pre-Prep School	Cornwall
Royal High School Bath	Somerset
Sheffield High School for Girls	South Yorkshire
Skippers Hill Manor Preparatory School	East Sussex
St Albans High School for Girls	Hertfordshire
St Catherine's School	Surrey

If you would like mention made of your upcoming head or principal appointment for which applications are sought please let us know – there is no charge for a listing.

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Moving appraisal beyond the classroom

Performance appraisal isn't just about what happens in the classroom. Deputy Head, Academic at Repton School, Derbyshire, Ashley Currie, explains the approach the school has taken to ensure staff are being recognised for their full role.

Founded more than 450 years ago, Repton School aims to combine traditional values with a modern approach to practice and outlook.

As a co-educational boarding and day school, as well as high standards of academic education, the school also offers a wide range of co-curricular activities and staff are also responsible for the pastoral care of students.

Consequently, the leadership team wanted to ensure that the performance appraisal system reflected the multi-faceted roles that many staff perform.

We needed an approach that recognised our people for their full role; a holistic, reflective approach that constantly develops professional practice.

To this end the school implemented an online platform in 2022 to support its processes for staff appraisal. Since then, staff have used the system to document their professional development and training.

We use it to share feedback from regular observations, which can be recorded during lessons. Staff like the fact they can see that feedback straight after the lesson

and can digest those comments before any coaching conversations. We have avoided giving colleagues grades or number ratings because we want our staff to develop their own individual practice within our standards and values.

What's equally important is the way we can use this approach for the other roles that staff do, whether that's coaching sport, tutoring or pastoral care. These are important aspects of life at Repton and we want to be able to capture that so our appraisal process is 360° in its approach.

While the system provides us with the Teachers' Standards for classroom staff to self-review against, it is also able to incorporate our values and standards for the pastoral and co-curricular side of school life. This will reflect colleagues' contributions that could include being a pastoral tutor, a higher education advisor or the U14C football coach!

This formalised approach has encouraged teachers to be a lot more reflective. I think we're very good at self-analysis and improvement but now we have a

greater impetus that encourages more self-reflection and collaboration.

It has encouraged more peer observations of classes and it has sparked conversations about our practice inside and outside the classroom which probably weren't happening as much before. Colleagues are working together and coaching each other in their various areas of expertise.

If I coach one of the school football teams then my professional development in that role should be just as important as my performance in the classroom. I would regularly have a 20-minute conversation with the head of football and ask what my development points should be. I might come away from that conversation with just one small improvement point, which still makes that interaction valuable. Now we have a way of formally capturing those improvement points as part of our professional development. It spurs you on to keep on improving in every aspect of your professional life.

The shift has helped the school to strengthen the appraisal process and ensure that staff are sharing best practice. The system has given us more structure for some of those opportunities to collaborate through observations and coaching conversations. It has helped to facilitate those little sparks and conversations around the school. Nobody wants to be performance managed, but people do want to have opportunities to develop and this fresh approach has enabled us to do that. Teachers are time-poor and this has stripped away any unnecessary administration from the appraisal 360 process.



Ashley Currie

Five key steps to shift your school's approach to performance appraisal:

- 1 Forward focus your conversations about objectives. Start any appraisal by evaluating an individual's strengths and areas for development, for example with a 360-degree peer feedback review that explores the individual's competencies within a framework related to their role and the requirements of their organisation.
- 2 Evaluate against standards and competencies. Alongside the performance review, self-evaluation against national standards or the school's own frameworks provides a focus for conversations around individual objectives, identifying areas that an individual may want to develop or training needs that have been identified in the context of the department team or school.
- 3 Set clear and precise objectives, differentiated according to role. Setting clear objectives makes it easier to agree on success criteria. These should link explicitly to team and school strategic plans. Differentiate objectives so that there is clarity in expected impact relevant to the appraisee's role. Moderation of this is essential. It is critical that colleagues define any personal objectives with the senior leadership team.
- 4 Personalise support and CPD. The CPD lead will pull together all the professional learning needs, from those identified individually to those that meet the mandatory needs of the organisation. All professional learning activities should be evaluated for impact and reviewed as part of the appraisal 360 process.
- 5 Review progress throughout the cycle. Rather than a single one-off appraisal event, ongoing dialogue between individuals and their reviewers is shown to have a greater impact on success. Frequent, less formal conversations around objectives and professional development throughout the cycle helps to maintain momentum and allows for changing the focus of objectives if needed.



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