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In this issue...



Reach for the stars

Students at Hymers College, East Yorkshire, have been urged by an American astronaut to work hard and never give up on their dreams.

Don Thomas, a veteran of four NASA space shuttle missions, delivered a talk in which he insisted one of them could become the first person to set foot on Mars. Mr Thomas spoke passionately about his own personal journey to becoming an astronaut – which included being turned down three times before finally being accepted – and detailed exactly what it is like to live and work in space. He told students: “Do your best, work hard, and never give up. Don’t listen to anyone who says you can’t achieve something. If you work hard and are passionate, you can do anything in your lives.”

Around 200 students attended the event. Along with Hymers students, the school opened its doors to students from other schools as well, including St Mary’s College, Beverley Grammar School, Driffild Junior School and Withernsea High School.

Following the talk by Mr Thomas, the years 6 to 11 students and a seven-strong group of Hymers sixth form physics students were given the opportunity to ask questions and get signed photographs.

Year 8 Hymers student Ram Pisharody, whose dream is to become an astronaut himself, was instrumental in bringing Mr Thomas to the school. Mr Thomas is in the UK as part of a space talks programme by Space Inspires, and Ram’s family have contact with the organisers from previous events they have attended. The family got in touch to invite Mr Thomas to Hymers, which he accepted.

Pictured (l to r): Hymers College Headmaster Justin Stanley, student Ram Pisharody, Don Thomas and Ram’s mum Sandhya

Cover background

D-Day 80

Commemoration events and activities have taken place across the country to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day with pupils at Portsmouth High School GDST, Hampshire, witnessing a Red Arrows flypast. To read more about this and other D-Day coverage see pages 14-15.

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Latest thoughts on the proposed policy to add VAT to fees

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Is Your School Mentioned?

Schools featured in this issue include:

ACS International School Hillingdon; AKS Lytham; Aldenham School; Avondale Prep School; Battle Abbey School; Belvedere Academy GDST; Benenden School; Bishop’s Stortford College; Blackheath High School GDST; Bolton School Girls’ Division; Bootham School; Brighton Girls GDST; Bromley High School GDST; Bromsgrove School; Bryanston School; Cheam School; Cranleigh School; Dame Allan’s Schools; Downe House; Ellesmere College; Fairfield Prep School; Felsted School; Francis Holland School, Sloane Square; Halliford School; The High School of Glasgow; Hymers College; Kimbolton School; King’s Ely; Leighton Park School; Loughborough Schools Foundation; Morrison’s Academy; Moultsford Prep School; New Hall School; Nottingham Girls’ High School GDST; Old Hall School; Poeklington School; Portsmouth High School GDST; Queen’s College, Taunton; RGS Newcastle; RGS Worcester Schools; Shebbear College; Solihull Prep School; South Hampstead High School GDST; St Martin’s School, Bournemouth; Streatham & Clapham High School GDST; Windlesham House School; Wisbech Grammar School; Wrekin College; York House School

Fees in advance – liability for back VAT

Will there be a retrospective VAT charge on school fees and who will foot the bill? Legal director from the charities and independent schools team at law firm Moore Barlow, Paul Ridout, considers whether backdated taxation is likely to happen.



Paul Ridout

One of the questions that has rumbled in the background of the debate about independent school fees is whether a new government might seek to make VAT payable on fees that parents have paid to schools earlier than required by the usual contractual arrangements, even if those payments were made before any formal announcement by a new government of the changes it proposes to make to the VAT rules.

The possibility of retrospective taxation has always been present in the background and it has been discussed in relation to independent school fees from time to time ever since Labour announced its plans to end the VAT exemption.

This all came into sharper focus in recent months, as Labour has talked more about anti-forestalling measures as a way of preventing parents from avoiding the VAT charge by paying fees in advance. However, even though there is no complete bar to retrospective taxation, any measure that changes the tax treatment of a transaction after the parties have entered into it is likely to raise some hackles. This is because it is generally accepted that, in order for people to be able properly to manage their affairs and more generally for commerce to flourish, people need to be able to determine what the tax implications are before

they enter into any transactions. Debates on this subject have referred back to the 18th century economist Adam Smith, who wrote (in *The Wealth of Nations*) that: “The tax which each individual is bound to pay ought to be certain, and not arbitrary. The time of payment, the manner of payment, the quantity to be paid, ought all to be clear and plain to the contributor, and to every other person.”

Over the last 50 years or so, retrospective changes to tax law have been used to tackle avoidance schemes and while these have sometimes been challenged by reference to the right to peaceful enjoyment of one’s possessions under human rights law, it is clear that retrospective taxation can (and does) happen where fair warning has been given about an intention to tackle tax avoidance. This is permitted under Parliamentary conventions that were set out in what is known as the Rees Rules, so called after the MP for Dover and Deal who stipulated the conditions that must be complied with by any retrospective tax measures, in response to the Chancellor Denis Healey’s announcement in April 1978 of his plans to tackle “artificial avoidance by certain partnerships dealing with commodity futures” with measures that would be backdated to 6 April 1976. A more recent example of

retrospective taxation happened when the Chancellor had warned (in a budget speech in March 2012) that the government would act against those seeking to avoid SDLT under measures that did not come into effect until the following year.

However, in relation to Labour’s policy on school fees, it is important to bear in mind that:

- (a) we are talking about a measure proposed by a party that is still in opposition, and not an announcement of measures by the government of the day; and
- (b) the sorts of arrangements that many schools have in place for the payment of fees in advance were devised long before the current Labour policy was published, as a way of delivering legitimate benefits to both parties and were not invented as a way of avoiding a threatened VAT charge on fees.

Both these factors would suggest that a retrospective VAT charge on fees paid before any announcement of a change to the rules is looking quite unlikely.

Having said that, schools do need to tread carefully, and it would be unwise for anyone to promote a fees in advance scheme with a promise of escaping a VAT charge. The more a scheme appears to be driven by a desire to avoid VAT, the more likely it

is to be vulnerable to challenge by HMRC. If a school has not trodden carefully and has entered into an arrangement that is caught by a retrospective charge to VAT and that does not make it clear where the liability for any backdated VAT rests, the school may be unable to compel parents to pay an extra 20% on fees already paid, in which case it would end up covering the cost of accounting to HMRC for the VAT due.

In our experience, however, schools are shying away from promoting these schemes in anticipation of a change to the VAT treatment of school fees, not least because they recognise that where Parliament has decided tax is due, that tax should be paid even if they do not always agree with the thinking behind it. Anecdotally, we are aware that some parents are asking about options for paying fees in advance, and that schools that do have facilities in place to accept fees in advance are making it clear to parents that:

- they cannot guarantee that payments into a scheme will not be caught by any future anti-forestalling measures brought in after the election; and
- any VAT or other charge imposed after the event will have to be paid by parents.



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A recipe for disaster in the SEND sector?

Whilst it is understood that children in receipt of an EHCP will be exempt from VAT under the proposed Labour policy, what might be the potential impact to the SEND sector where many children who receive support without an EHCP? Chief Executive Officer of the Independent Schools Council, Julie Robinson, shares some thoughts.



We in the independent sector find ourselves in interesting times. Since last month's announcement of a surprise General Election, attention has turned to the political parties and their manifesto pledges. In this context, Labour's proposal to add VAT to independent school fees has been placed under the microscope.

Experts and commentators in and outside education have shared their views, as have school leaders and parents themselves. Across ISC, we remain concerned about the unintended consequences of the policy: the impact it could have on families; small, specialist independent schools, and the knock-on effect it would have on state schools. Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are among those who face huge disruption to their education should VAT be added to school fees.

Independent schools add vital capacity to the wider education system in terms of special needs provision. The latest ISC Census shows there are 111,154 children attending our schools who have been identified as having SEND, equating to a fifth of all pupils. Of these, over 103,000 receive support despite not being in receipt of an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Only 7,646 children at ISC schools have an EHCP, which is funded by the local authority.

There is a lack of detail available about Labour's plans to tax school fees. What we know is that children in receipt of an EHCP would be exempt from VAT under the policy. While this is welcome news, it does little to quell concerns shared by schools and their families, given the vast

majority of pupils receiving SEND support do not have an EHCP.

So, what would VAT on fees mean for this sort of provision?

The implications are significant. Unfortunately, it would make independent education unaffordable for many parents of children with SEND. Smaller, more vulnerable independent schools may face closure as pupils move to the already stretched state sector. SEND provision in the state system is already in crisis, so these schools would likely lack the capacity and resource needed to support any influx of additional pupils. There is an incentive for more families to seek EHCPs, since these would be VAT-exempt. This would add strain on local authorities, already struggling to cope with a rise in applications. Recent reports suggest thousands of children with complex

needs are missing out on support because councils are unable to meet care plan deadlines, said to be a result of growing demand and insufficient funding.

This is why we are calling for an exemption for all pupils with SEND from the VAT proposals, as well as a full impact assessment of the policy on state SEND provision and local authority budgets. We are concerned that without a comprehensive evaluation of the potential consequences, Labour's pledge could create a catastrophe in the SEND sector.

All children should be able to access the specialist support they need, and their families should have freedom to opt for an independent school without the threat of punitive tax measures affecting their choice.

To read a summary report on the latest ISC Census please see page 38

Boarding Schools' Association memo to Labour

The Labour Party has been asked to make sure its plans for government do not end up placing a tax on children sleeping.

The call from the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA) comes in the wake of Keir Starmer's pledge to introduce VAT on independent school fees in the event of winning the General Election on 4 July.

The BSA has asked the Labour Party to consider their plans so that the actual costs of children sleeping at school, which are separate to school tuition fees, are not included in the VAT plans.

The BSA also asked Labour to guarantee that VAT is not added to any school fees for:

- children with special educational needs and disabilities
- children of parents in the armed forces and diplomatic services, whose jobs mean they cannot avoid being away from home, nor for
- skilled music and dance prodigies receiving grants to attend specialist schools

BSA director David Walker said:

"Should Labour win the next election, we would welcome discussions to make sure their plans to introduce VAT on independent school fees do not have unwanted consequences.

"One of the biggest concerns of our member schools is that boarding itself is not subject to VAT, as those are effectively the social care costs of sleeping and eating away from home.

"We are grateful to the Labour Party for already indicating that it would make an exemption on VAT for boarding fees at state boarding schools.

"However, we believe that boarding fees in all schools should be exempted, as there is no sense in implementing a tax on sleeping overnight in one type of school and not another.

"Put simply, we believe there should be no tax on children sleeping at all.

"On the subject of tuition fees, we would ask the Labour Party

to understand that around 20 per cent of children at boarding schools are there to help their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

"Another 4,700 pupils are at boarding schools because their parents are in the Army, Royal Navy or Royal Air Force, or because their parents are in the diplomatic service, roles which often mean they are working abroad.

"We do not believe it would be fair to place an extra financial burden on parents of SEND pupils, or on parents whose jobs serving our nation mean their children need to be educated at boarding schools.

"We are also concerned that gifted children who receive special funding to attend specialist music and dance schools are not included in any VAT fees, as these extra costs could make it difficult for their parents to afford for them to go.

"These areas are important and

could easily get lost. That's why we want all parties to understand the UK is a world leader in boarding and ensure they support it properly if they get into government."

The BSA says UK private boarding schools generate £3bn a year in revenues, support nearly 65,000 jobs, including 26,000 teachers as well as others working in schools and wider communities, and already contribute £900m annually in tax.

Mr Walker added: "We're calling on all parties running to form the next government officially to recognise, promote and protect one of the jewels in the crown of UK education.

"The BSA has always worked closely with governments of all parties and we look forward to continuing doing so, but hope the new government will consider the impact of any policy commitments on boarding school education and its competitiveness on the world stage."

How would VAT on fees work in practice?

VAT and indirect taxation specialist Jonathan Main, provides some guidance.

In the last few months, there has been an awful lot of press speculation and commentary from a variety of sources on the Labour Party plans to impose VAT on independent school fees. It is clear this remains one of the highest profile tax issues in the final days of the election campaign.

This article will provide you with clarity on the:

- Required changes to primary VAT legislation
- The impact on pupils with special educational needs
- Timeframe to make these changes
- Steps to take today to plan for tomorrow

Required changes to primary VAT legislation

The Labour Party Manifesto makes it clear that VAT will be imposed on independent school fees. They have separately clarified that the change will apply to full-time education provided to children of compulsory school age, in line with the Department of Education's definition of regulated independent schools. The Labour Party has previously made it clear that VAT will be imposed on boarding fees. It would be reasonable to draw an inference from confirmation of boarding fees that VAT will also be imposed on other services which HMRC already consider are closely related to the provision of education. This would include:

- Catering
- Transport
- School trips
- Field trips

To secure VAT exemption an education provider must be an "eligible body", as defined in

Note (1), Group 6, Schedule 9, VAT Act 1994. An independent school constituted as a charity is an eligible body because it "is precluded from distributing and does not distribute any profit it makes" and additionally because it is a school. The term "education" is not defined in the VAT Act, rather the VAT exemption for education is reliant on the nature of the provider, rather than the education provided to the pupil.

If we assume for the purposes of this article that all independent schools are charities, HM Treasury solicitors will need to change the definition of an eligible body in Note (1) to exclude independent schools, even though they are precluded from distributing profits.

Although the changes are conceptually quite straightforward, HM Treasury and HMRC will wish to avoid any unintended consequences, such as a restriction of the VAT exemption for other charities or third sector organisations. They may also wish to consider whether to impose VAT on other independent schools, such as alternative providers of education funded by local government.

The impact on pupils with special educational needs

The Labour Party has confirmed that VAT will not be imposed on pupils with an educational health care plan ("EHCP") funded by local government. The key issue is whether the local authority agrees that the independent school, rather than a local state school, is best placed to meet the pupil's needs. If a parent decides to fund the cost of independent school provision, because the local authority is not willing to do so, we understand that the fees paid would be subject to VAT.

Timeframe to make these changes

In addition to identification of the required change, Parliament needs a path to enact the changes required. This requires an Act of Parliament, the Finance Bill published shortly after the Labour Party's first budget in September would satisfy that requirement. The Finance Act is a "money bill", which matters for the following reasons, as the Parliament website explains. "A bill that is certified as a money bill and which has been passed by the Commons will become law after one month, with or without the approval of the House of Lords, under the terms of the Parliament Acts."

The change required to VAT law is clear, it can be announced in an autumn Budget, and can be enacted in a Finance Act, which in the normal course of events may receive Royal Assent no later than early 2025. There is therefore a path to the introduction of VAT from the first half of 2025. There are several additional factors which government may wish to consider.

- HMRC may need time to update its guidance on the VAT liability of education
- A more orderly change may be from the start of the 25/26 academic year
- Government may wish to consult to ensure that the law achieves its intended outcome
- A transition period for the sector would help facilitate the systems and process changes required to introduce VAT
- Schools need time to understand the overall financial impact of VAT on their fees after the deduction of recoverable VAT on their costs.



Jonathan Main

Notwithstanding the above, the Labour Party may wish to push these changes through as soon as possible after the election, in which case we may see draft legislation before the first Budget in late September

In conclusion, the date range for this change is autumn 2024 to autumn 2025, with a middle ground of spring 2025.

What can you do today to plan for tomorrow?

This a good starting point:

- Change your accounting software to separately record VAT on your costs. This will make it easier to secure full VAT recovery in the future
- Record all building and renovation work in the last ten years with total spend above £250,000. You can secure partial recovery of VAT on these costs following the imposition of VAT
- Assess the net financial position on the introduction of VAT after taking account of any recoverable VAT on your costs
- If appropriate, consider the date on which the school should register for VAT. Register too early, and you may subject other income to VAT earlier than necessary

This article provides you with as much certainty as possible, in the context of an inherently uncertain future.

Jonathan Main has been a Partner at MHA since 2018. He qualified with the Chartered Institute of Taxation as a chartered tax adviser in 1994, as an accredited mediator with the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution in 2016, and as a Customs Practitioner with The Institute of Export and International Trade in 2022.

He has nearly forty years' experience in the world of VAT and indirect taxation, including time spent as a Partner in other professional services firms.

Jonathan is leading the firm's focus on VAT, as it affects the education sector with a particular focus on the Labour Party's plans to impose VAT on private school fees.

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VAT impact - research findings

Findings from two recent research projects indicate widespread concern amongst parents about the impact of VAT on fees.

Research carried out earlier this year on 1,000 UK parents with children in private education in the UK, commissioned by finance advisor, Ashbridge Partners, found that parents will have to go to great lengths to afford the proposed increase in fees if they want to keep their children in private school.

Nearly a third will have to re-mortgage their home (30 per cent), and more than one in 10 will be forced to sell their property (11 per cent) or take a second job (16 per cent). A handful of parents said they would have to rent out their spare room to cover the extra cost while around 30 per cent are speaking to a finance adviser for help.

Nearly 15 per cent of parents' plan to move their children into state education as early as after prep school. Almost one in ten parents say that moving their child into state education will mean the money they save on VAT will be enough to afford to move their children back into private education later on in their schooling for GCSEs or A-levels.

London and the south-east, (ranked by the recent ONS House Price

Index as the top two most expensive places to buy a property in UK) were some of the worst affected areas by Labour's proposal. One in five parents in both regions will 'definitely' have to remove their children from private education should VAT be applied to fees, while nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of parents in the south-east will need to take another job to cover the additional costs.

Families nationally have said that cutting back on 'extras' will be a necessity with 39 per cent cutting back on school trips, and a quarter planning to cancel or reduce family holidays. 15 per cent will look to trim their household bills, one in ten will downsize the family car, and 6 per cent will reduce pension contributions. The picture was much higher in some regions with more families in the south east (40 per cent), north east (48 per cent) and Wales (50 per cent) planning to reduce school trips, with well over a quarter in the south west (30 per cent), Yorkshire (34 per cent) and midlands and Wales both (28 per cent), cutting down their spend on family holidays.

The research was commissioned by Ashbridge Partners in February 2024, conducted online on 1,000 UK parents with at least one child currently in an independent school in the UK, and whose school fees are not paid in full by a corporation, scholarship, or Government / military department.

The possible application of VAT to school fees would make independent school unaffordable for one in three (33%) of parents questioned while 36% say they would look for a cheaper alternative and 20% say asking family for financial help would be an option.

These figures come from research from Premium Credit's School Fee Plan, provider of fee finance.

The research shows that on average parents are spending 15% of their income on school fees but nearly a quarter (23%) say a fifth or more of their income goes on these. More than half (51%) who have struggled to pay fees have discussed their issues with the school.

The study found that increasingly parents are looking for other ways to afford fees. Around 57% who do not pay fees monthly currently say they would consider switching. More than

half (52%) of parents say they would consider a scheme which enables them to spread the cost.

Around half (53%) questioned pay fees every term while 7% pay annually and 26% pay monthly with 9% paying a lump sum upfront and 5% preferring to not answer.

Among those struggling to pay currently, nearly two out of five (38%) say they are planning to take children out of private school with another 41% thinking about withdrawing them.

Stewart Ward, Director Education Sector & Head of School Fee Plan, Premium Credit said: "Parents with children at private schools are increasingly looking for solutions which will make the cost more affordable. It is clear that many are struggling currently and expect the financial strain to increase".

The Premium Credit research was conducted by Viewsbank online among 986 parents including 301 whose children currently attend or have attended independent schools in the UK between March 25th and April 2nd 2024.



The Independent
Schools Magazine

From the Editor's Chair

A Matter of Concern

"In the 17 years we have published this magazine we have only once before expressed our opinion through an Editorial.

"Today, we do so again, because we are not only dedicated flag-wavers for the independent education sector, but also for the value of a decent education for every child in the nation.

"The notion of applying VAT to school fees, is, in our opinion, potentially seriously damaging to both sectors.

"The Commentary on the following page sets out our editorial view.

"Heads, bursars, staff – in fact all readers – are welcome to copy and distribute the piece as they wish. We hope it will contribute some reality to the debate over what we consider a dangerous gamble with educational provision in our country".

Kimble Earl
Editor



COMMENTARY

VAT on fees – danger looms for both independent & state sectors

The idea of adding 20% VAT to independent school fees is potentially damaging to both independent and state schools, and has not been thought through.

It appears to be based on the notion that the money raised would support the state sector. Originally this was said to be a bonanza of £1.7bn, a figure quickly reduced when advocates of the policy learnt that if independent schools had to charge VAT they could also reclaim it on certain items of expenditure. It was chopped back further upon the belated realisation that whilst basic fees might be VAT-able other elements within termly invoices would be exempt.

The figure banded about now is £1.3bn. But even this heavily discounted figure fails to take into account the impact of the potential shift of numbers from independent to state.

Estimates for this have varied from 2% to 30%. One put it as high as 40%.

Let's do the maths using a mid-point estimate of 20%.

Assume 600,000 pupils in the independent sector with £15,000pa average VAT-able fees per pupil.

Assuming VAT @ 20%, the potential VAT take is £3,000 per pupil.

The cost of educating a pupil in the state sector is around £8,000

Therefore every pupil who switches from the independent sector to state will effectively cost the Exchequer £11,000

If 20% switch, i.e. 120,000 pupils, the exchequer will be down £1.32bn.

In other words, if 1 in 5 independent school pupils switch sectors then the hoped-for benefit to the Exchequer of imposing VAT will be reduced to zero.

No-one knows what the switch rate will be. If that weren't enough of a gamble, there are more uncertainties.

Has anyone considered how the state sector will cope with an influx of pupils from the independent sector?

By how much will class sizes have to increase in state schools to cope with that influx?

How much capital expenditure will be required to increase capacity at state schools?

By how much will independent schools – faced with reducing pupil rolls – have to cut the support they offer to the state sector via partnerships? And how will state sector schools make that up?

We have yet to see such figures. Perhaps the advocates of adding VAT to school fees are frightened to reveal the true impact on the state sector... after all, they made serious errors on the original headline-grabbing bonanza calculations and no-one likes to be proved wrong too many times.

It would be wiser to rely on experience rather than guesswork. The respected Adam Smith Institute reports that Greece applied a 23% VAT charge on independent school fees in 2015. Schools closed, teachers were made redundant, and the state sector was overwhelmed and faced huge teacher shortages.

Some families will be able to cope with an increase in bills without any problem, but the fact so often overlooked by those with an anti-independent-school mindset is that the majority of independent school parents are far from wealthy; they choose to pay for their children to have an independent education, and make sacrifices to do so. The imposition of VAT may well make it unaffordable, and the result could spell seriously bad news for both sectors of the education system in the UK.

Adding VAT to school fees is a dangerous, ill-considered notion. It should be consigned to the bin.



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Adding value to school fees – what you don't see in the prospectus

In an ever-evolving world of independent schools where factors like the increased cost of living have put additional pressure on the affordability of an independent education, many schools are looking to add value to daily life that is not always put in print. From wrap-around care, school laundry (even washing PE kits), to extra suppers, counselling services, to books and more, Headmaster at Windlesham House School, West Sussex, considers at why schools are needing to up their game.

As schools continue to face an increasingly competitive market where parents are looking for the best possible value for the fees, it is essential that we adopt a customer focused approach. We can no longer justify purely providing a standard curriculum with a few enrichment highlights along way. We must look beyond the basics and fully understand what parents value most, which extras they now consider to be essentials, and where, as schools, we can support them and their children beyond the obvious. From additional subjects, greater co-curricular choice, extended wrap-around care, an increased number of enrichment trips and visits, to tailored support and parent workshops – the list is long and the opportunities endless.

Over recent years, the increased cost of living, high interest rates and larger than usual fee increases have all led to a squeeze on the affordability of independent education. School leaders and governing bodies cannot ignore the situation but understandably, they have themselves experienced increased financial challenges to ensure their schools remain viable and that they can attract and retain the best possible staff.

Beyond what is expected

For independent schools to remain a viable and realistic possibility for as many families as possible, it is more important than ever that we are able to demonstrate true and purposeful added value. Small class sizes, specialist teaching, and first-class facilities are now all taken for granted. Beyond this expected provision, parents are looking for more. Understanding parents as customers is a good starting point and ensuring that

at all times, the highest standards of care and professionalism are shown by all school staff.

Good schools have risen to this challenge through their own pursuit of excellence and genuine desire to offer the best possible education to the children in their care. It has also been essential to fully understand and capture the changing needs and requirements of parents and for them in turn, to have the confidence that schools are listening and adapting accordingly.

It would be fair to say that not all schools have adapted quite so quickly as others. Some may still believe that they can dictate to parents, ignore their perfectly reasonable requests and continue to provide a similar style and breadth of education from twenty years ago. As with all things, there is a flight to quality and schools must understand that parents are perceptive and discerning. Now more than ever, they are looking not only for quality but for good value for money too, though these are not mutually exclusive.

It is now common in many schools to see inclusive wrap around care from 8.00am until 6.00pm, a full range of co-curricular activities with many included in the termly fees, lunch and snacks as standard, a choice of languages taught and curriculum trips as standard. Beyond the obvious will be regular programmes of parenting workshops, overseas trips and sports tours, subject clinics and extension activities, Saturday morning activities, wellbeing support and the understanding that there is always someone at the school to whom parents can speak to or meet with, at short notice.

VAT on school fees will be a challenge

It was of course a very different situation ten years ago and there was, quite possibly, an air of complacency in some schools. Demand for places was high, interest rates low, almost negligible fee increases each year and schools, rather than parents, were able to set the pace. The idea of seeing parents as customers was virtually unheard of (and almost unpalatable to some teachers) and schools were able to take the view that they were the professionals and knew best.

Today, the challenges facing schools are set to increase. Labour's widely advertised plans to add VAT onto independent school fees have undoubtedly caused concern amongst parents and an inevitable questioning of the affordability of school fees. The introduction of VAT will necessitate fee increases and more than ever, schools will need to look at their offering and be confident that they are providing the best possible value to parents. It will be essential to strip out all unnecessary expenditure, maintain strict financial prudence and be able to demonstrate that additional costs passed on to parents are unavoidable.

At Windlesham House we aim to add value by providing a total and complete curriculum. This goes beyond the academic timetable and includes a full school day with activities and prep sessions until 6.00pm, non-compulsory Saturday morning enrichment activities with sports matches in the afternoon and over 150 co-curricular opportunities every week including scuba diving in the pool, horse riding, polo and glass fusing. On top of this, we have most recently introduced opportunities for parents too; a choir, swimming and tennis sessions,



Ben Evans

book club, sessions to support and explain their children's learning and a series of parenting workshops delivered by an external performance coach.

A home from home mentality

It is important to us that parents see Windlesham House not only as an excellent school for their children but also as an extended community, one in which we welcome and value everyone. The Windlesham Way complete with staff values is our customer service charter; understood and followed by all to ensure we constantly provide the highest standards of care and service. Ultimately, we welcome every visitor to the school as though they were a visitor to our own homes.

Our future plans are based on ensuring an even wider breadth of opportunity for pupils and families. Our 9-hole golf course will soon be complemented by a digital golf simulator and will be available to children and parents for lessons from our resident golf pro year-round. We are looking to offer additional languages such as German and Mandarin as standard, continue to increase our pupil wellbeing provision and free parenting courses, provide additional bus routes both locally and to London for weekly boarders and support parents even more as they navigate their children's learning journeys both at Windlesham House and beyond.

Without doubt, the independent educational landscape is changing rapidly and at Windlesham House, we are determined to remain relevant, progressive and at the forefront of schools nationally and internationally. Happy children who flourish and achieve their potential will always be the priority of all good schools.



Soapbox Derby 2024

Pupils, parents and staff from Felsted School, Essex, recently teamed up with REMAP engineers to take part in the annual Billericay Soapbox Derby. The event drew in thousands of spectators eager to witness the spectacle of soapbox chariots hurtling down to the finish line.

This year, Felsted pupils have partnered with REMAP, a charity dedicated to aiding individuals living with disabilities by designing and inventing free

The Felsted pit crew and supporters gathered round the REMAP soapbox

devices tailored to their needs, working collaboratively to create a computerised memory game aimed at assisting people with dementia. This ongoing work led the partnership to go full throttle at the Soapbox race, with REMAP calling on the Felsted Team to give them a flying start.

It culminated in a record-breaking run of REMAP's soapbox, shaving eight seconds off their previous best time.

Former Prime Minister speech



Sir John Major KG CH has visited Kimbolton School, Cambridgeshire. He delivered a speech to politics students, their parents, and staff.

Sir John shared his expertise, knowledge and anecdotes from his time in office as part of a series of informative talks and lectures organised by the school's Politics Society.

Known for his knowledge of international affairs and his diplomacy, Sir John engaged in a discussion with students on a range of topics. He emphasised the importance of education in shaping future leaders who are capable of navigating the challenges of an increasingly interconnected

Pictured: Kimbolton politics students pictured with Sir John Major

world. He also shared interesting reflections on his political career. The event concluded with a Q&A session.

The Politics Society at Kimbolton School often welcomes significant political figures and commentators for special one-off talks. Previous guests have included broadcaster and journalist Jeremy Paxman, Lord Butler of Brockwell (the former Cabinet Secretary to Thatcher, Major and Blair) and Mary Coughlan (former Deputy Premier of the Republic of Ireland). The society is open to all year groups and each term there is a programme of meetings, many of which are student-led/organised.

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What can I do with *because of* Classics?



Katharine Radice

Katharine Radice, Classics Lead for United Learning Multi-Academy Trust, shares her thoughts on the importance of teaching Classics and the transferable skills students can take from it.

“What can I do with Classics other than teach Latin?”. This question makes my heart sink – not because there’s no answer, but because it fundamentally misses the point.

Education is about developing the whole child, building skills and dispositions which enable our pupils to step forwards with confidence. The question of usability of knowledge is far less important than how the process of learning develops the child.

amabo, amabis, amabit: when my pupils chant their future tense endings, they are learning to be accurate over details, they are building

knowledge which helps them decode patterns, they are gaining transferable skills. They are also learning to take pride in getting it right and they are learning that some things take time, repetition and patience. All of these things are far more important than the basic knowledge of the future tense: the value is all about the process.

What’s more, when they learn about the Battle of Thermopylae, how the Greeks viewed the Persians or what caused Rome’s civil wars, they’re learning about human societies: they get to see the big questions of sameness v difference, individual v society, rational

thought v emotion played out on the Classical stage. This helps them think about dynamics within society today.

So, what can pupils do *because of* Classics? They can think carefully, they can be interested in differences, they can build an awareness of how things change over time, they can learn accuracy, patience and logic. They can develop their imagination and empathy. They can think better, faster and in more detail. The better question is what mental skill is there that *can’t* be developed via a subject as broad, interesting and ambitious as Classics?

Katharine Radice is the author of Bloomsbury Publishing’s Latin course for KS3 students, *de Romanis*. Find out more at www.bloomsbury.com/deromanis

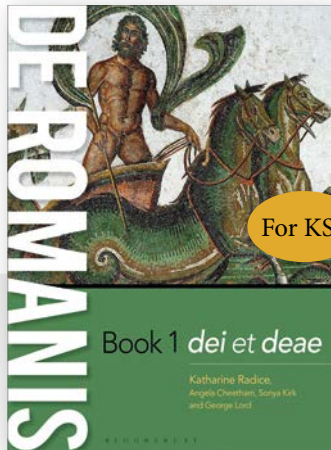


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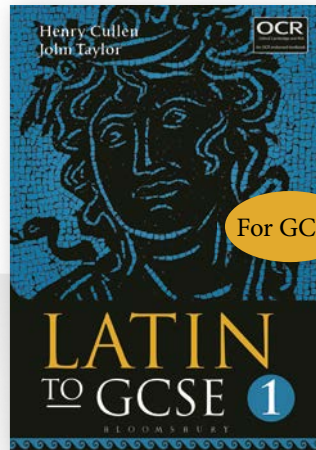
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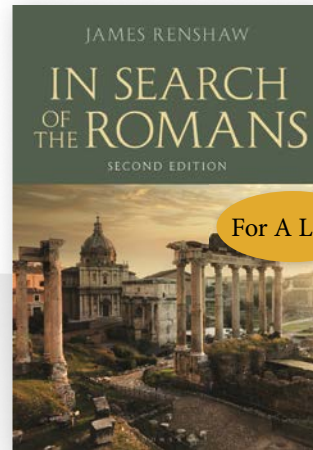
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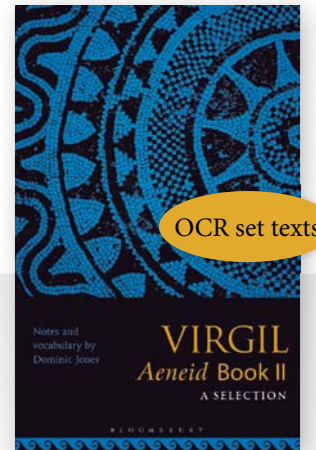
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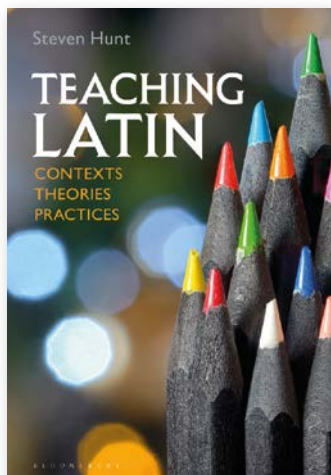


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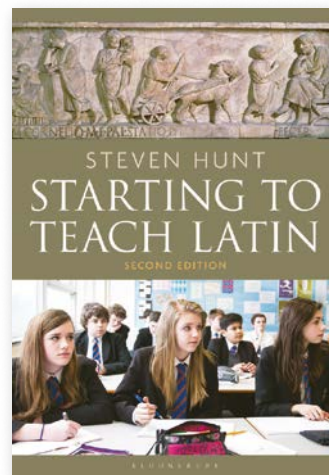
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Commemorations and memories

Pupils from Portsmouth High School GDST, Hampshire, have taken part in D-Day commemorative lessons and assemblies that were held to explain the significance of the date. Deputy Head, Mrs Sarah Parker, led an assembly at the Prep-School where she talked about bravery and teamwork.

'If you are brave and work together,' she said, 'you can achieve great things.'



Pictured: BBC Radio 4's Sunday Worship at Portsmouth Cathedral

The younger girls learned about the events of D-Day, tried their hands at deciphering Morse Code and found out all about the journey of Gustav the pigeon, who delivered the first news back to England that D-Day had commenced. The girls also decorated their outfits with red and blue tails to welcome the Red Arrows on their flypast.

In the senior school the pupils have been studying the 'Who? What? Where? When? Why?' of D-Day, and researching testimonies in their history lessons.

Portsmouth High School's younger choristers also sang at the events on Southsea Common for the BBC 1 live broadcast and pupils from Year 5 upwards sang with the Portsmouth Cathedral choir for BBC Radio 4's Sunday Worship.

Willys Jeep kit car

Wisbech Grammar School, Cambridgeshire, has unveiled a Willys Jeep 1/3 scale kit car, meticulously constructed by 1st Form pupils as part a Young Engineers Club, which promotes interest in building and repairing buggy cars on site.

The jeep was built to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D Day combining education with historical awareness.

Over a six week period, seven pupils constructed and painted a Toylander Willys Jeep, inspired by the vehicles used during the liberation of Europe by American, British, Free Dutch, and Free French forces.

Although the jeep bears American markings, it features a scratch-built Twin Vickers machine gun, typical of British and Free French SAS battalions, and an M1 carbine machine gun mounted on the front windscreen, reminiscent of the American paratrooper formations during Operation Market Garden.

This tribute holds personal significance for one of our staff members, whose great uncle was part of Colonel Jonny Frost's brigade in the Battle of Arnhem. His great uncle's bravery and sacrifice are remembered through this project, as he was captured by the Germans after the battle.



Pictured: Pupils with the kit car

Honouring sacrifices made



Pictured: Pocklington Dining Hall

The Pocklington School community, East Yorkshire, commemorated the 80th anniversary of the historic Normandy Landings. The day was remembered with a series of activities aimed at recognising and honouring the sacrifices made during the Second World War, and the selfless courage of the Normandy veterans.

Events began at 8.00am when the Pocklington Town Crier, Tony Cuffling, delivered the D-Day 80 Proclamation, in unison with events happening across the globe. In Wilberforce Court at the front of School, the Pocklington School CCF cadets stood as the Guard of Honour during the proceedings, alongside Pocklington Mayor, Cllr Roly Cronshaw. Attendees of the event included pupils, parents and staff of the School, as well as members of the community.

At 11.00am, pupils gathered for assemblies to participate in the national reading of the D-Day poem, D-Day Heroes, written by Roy Palmer, Chelsea Pensioner and Herald at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. It tells the story of the planning and

execution of the landings and honours those who participated. Throughout the week, tutor time and assemblies were focused on D-Day, providing pupils with an overview of D-Day and the commemorations, and the opportunity to learn more about the day's special significance from the teachers in the History Department. Pupils listened to the story of Lionel Arthur Roebuck, who landed on Sword beach with the East Yorkshire regiment 80 years ago, which gives insight into the challenges the veterans faced as they landed on the Normandy beaches.

And at lunchtime, pupils were served Fish, Chips and Mushy Peas as part of a national gesture of support to the fishing trade, who fished the dangerous seas during the war, along with the men and women who farmed the fields to keep the nation fed. During both World Wars, the British Government ensured the supply of fish and potatoes to keep the national dish and humble meal, a boost to morale and these foods were among the few that were not rationed.



Pictured: CCF Guard of Honour with Pocklington Mayor and Town Crier



Wartime recipes

In commemoration of the D-Day landings, pupils at Queen's College Taunton, Somerset, stepped back in time to explore the history of wartime Britain through the kitchen.

As part of the school's educational activities, students from Year 4 and Year 5 engaged in making traditional wartime recipes, experiencing firsthand the challenges and creativity of cooking during the era of rationing.

Year 5 pupils made Potato Scones, a popular wartime recipe. Through this activity, they learned about the importance of making ingredients stretch further and the ingenuity of mixing and using ingredients in new ways. By swapping some of the flour for mashed potato, they created tasty scones that were a staple during the war.

Pictured: Pupils making traditional wartime recipes

Year 4 pupils prepared Carrot Cookies, discovering why carrots were a crucial ingredient during the war. They also learned about the famous wartime story that eating carrots could help you see in the dark – a clever piece of propaganda to encourage the consumption of carrots, which were plentiful in Britain.

Both activities provided hands-on learning experience, helping pupils understand the historical context of wartime rationing and the innovative spirit of those who lived through it. These recipes are not just about food; they are a testament to resilience and creativity in difficult times. Pupil participation in making wartime recipes brought history to life in a memorable and tasty way.

Visit to Normandy

Nine students from Year 8 at Halliford School, Surrey, have recently returned from a trip to Normandy as part of the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings. Along with Headmaster James Davies and Mme Lamy from the French Department, they were hosted by the village of Rots just outside Caen. Rots was liberated by 46 Royal Marine Commando alongside members of the Canadian Forces.

33 Canadians and 22 British soldiers lost their lives in freeing the village, and ever since 2004, a group of villagers have organised special celebrations every five years to bring together veterans and young people from the UK, Germany, France, Canada and the US to share in a series of special events. Halliford students and staff were all hosted by members of the village. They were able to spend

time understanding the events of 1944, talking to young people and those in the village as well as friends and family of the veterans.

Each day, there were visits to various memorials and sites which included witnessing a re-enactment of the D-Day Landings on Gold Beach from current members of the Royal Marine Commandos.

Students had also each researched a soldier who was honoured at the new British Memorial in Normandy. They spent a moving day finding their names and leaving personal messages to each of them, thanks to wooden crosses provided by the local British Legion branch.

The highlight of the trip was the final parade through the village with all the young people from different countries alongside over 200 friends and family members of the veterans from 46 Royal Marine Commando. Following

CCF Honour Guard

Cadets from AKS Lytham, Lancashire, have taken part in Fylde Council's commemoration of the 80th anniversary of D-Day at Fairhaven Lake, Lytham St Annes.

At precisely 9:15pm on Thursday 6th June, a beacon was lit, serving as a symbol of hope and resilience. This act of remembrance paid tribute to the soldiers who stormed the beaches of Normandy 80 years ago, forever changing the course of history.

The Mayor of Fylde, Councillor Karen Henshaw JP, who attended the event said: "It was an honour to commemorate

this significant anniversary with our community. The bravery and sacrifice of our veterans continue to inspire us, and it is our duty to remember and cherish their legacy. I am proud of how our community came together to mark this important occasion."

WO2 Hobson-Woodhead, SSI AKS Lytham CCF added "This is the third Honour Guard AKS Cadets have been asked to provide for ceremonies in the area, previous ones being the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon Ceremony and a Falkland's Remembrance Ceremony in 2022."



Pictured: The lit beacon

a pipe and drums band and the standard bearers of Les Drapeaux de France, they marched through the roads and lanes of Rots first to the Canadian Memorial. After this, they witnessed the unveiling of a plaque to mark the incredible life of the last surviving veteran from 46 Royal Marine Commandos, John Harrison. They then gathered at the memorial to 46 Royal Marine Commando to honour the memory

of the 22 young men, some only 18, who gave their lives to liberate the village.

The day concluded with a unique ceremony where messages of peace were placed into a special wooden tree earlier in the day. Messages have been placed in the tree every five years and will be opened and read again in 2044 at the 100th anniversary.



Pictured: Headmaster James Davies and students at the new British Memorial in Normandy

Promoting reading in history and beyond

When learning about the past reading, interrogating and deciphering are key skills. Head of History and Politics at Aldenham School, Hertfordshire, Ben Frai, discusses how encapsulating a culture of exploring and integrating disciplinary knowledge into all stages of the curriculum led to the development of the Aldenham School Book Festival.



History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historian in documents, inscriptions, and so on, like fish on the fishmonger's slab. The historian collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him.

On the main wall of the Gilbert Building in which the History classrooms are located at Aldenham School is displayed this quote from E.H. Carr, a historian who explored what the discipline of History involved. Members of my department and I went to a panel discussion delivered in part by his Granddaughter, Elizabeth Carr, based around a collaborative book entitled 'What is History Now?' Indeed exploring and then integrating disciplinary knowledge into all stages of the curriculum at Aldenham has been a key focus of mine.

I think it has gone well. At Key Stage Three, in addition to focussing on the work of local historians each year, Year 7s also look to Janina Rameriz to evaluate the relative importance of Aethelflaed of Mercia compared to her more revered father, Alfred. Year 8s study a work of historical fiction, Cane Warriors as a lens

into the horrors of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade whilst Year 9s study an alternative interpretation of why the First World War started by learning about Christopher Clark's hypothesis, The Sleepwalkers. Guided, whole class and individualised reading has become regular practice. Grappling with complicated texts is encouraged.

The current crop of Year 11 students have spent the last five years studying a redesigned curriculum. In an exit survey completed before their exams, responders to the question of:

'How do we know about the past?' showed a good understanding and suggested that historians at Aldenham read, interrogate and decipher when learning about the past.

But I wanted to encapsulate this culture on a vaster scale. Consequently, in March 2024, after six months' worth of planning, organising and innovating, the inaugural Aldenham Book Festival was held. The purpose of this event was twofold; to promote and spread a love of literature whether it be fiction or non-fiction. Whether it be Science based, Economics inspired or multi-

disciplinary. Secondly, a main aim was to enable collaboration between different elements of the Aldenham Foundation. This meant departmental collaboration as well as inter-school collaboration between the three schools.

So, I gathered ideas and then gathered a team. I met with various individuals to use the institutional experience and innovation available to me to expand and consolidate the vision I had. I held consultative meetings, preliminary meetings, pre-preliminary meetings, actual meetings... with the events and marketing team, the catering team, the admissions team, the finance team, a range of willing volunteers from the teaching staff and of course, the librarian. Together, this wide-ranging co-operative focussed on logistics that wouldn't overly disrupt important lesson time but most importantly we dreamt up activities and sessions that would attract the most avid reader as well as the most disinterested. What transpired was a bonanza of literature themed involvement across the Aldenham community.

Kicking off with a book themed tutor time and whole school assembly, the first few days were also used by the Prep Schools to bring in authors. In the lead up to the festival and in the initial assembly the charity, Children's Book Project, was promoted which resulted in a large collection of 'gently used' books being donated to homes not as fortunate. Things really started to shift on the Wednesday, the day before World Book Day. 100 Year 5 pupils from surrounding prep schools were invited to take part in various subject specific workshops. Not only was this a great opportunity to attract the next generation of Aldenhamians, it also led

to genuine satisfaction and enjoyment from the staff leading the workshops, transforming their daily routine for a morning. Conscious not to disrupt lessons, the library was of course the hub for the festival and hosted special lunchtime events on competing football autobiographies, a debate on whether books should be banned and a 'paired silent writing' competition. The events team made the library look spectacular for the few days; there was definitely 'something happening'.

My personal highlight was the Thursday evening where senior pupils, parents and staff gathered to explore the question of 'What is the Future of Writing?'. A panel comprised of a published author – teacher, a magazine publisher, a best-selling crime novelist and a British author who writes his works in Italian discussed the topic from their various perspectives and the questions emanating from the pupils at the end showed a deep engagement in the literary discourse they were exposed to. The week was rounded off by another whole school assembly, this time in the form of an interview with another significant author and whilst all this was going on, some Senior School pupils made their way to the Prep School to lead literature-based activities and read with the younger members of the Aldenham community.

We hope to run the festival bi-annually, keeping each event fresh and exciting. Indeed, the hope is to run another kind of academic festival next year along the same kind of lines. What would I say to that event coordinator? Have a clear vision and set of objectives but be prepared to compromise and adapt given the whole school nature of the initiative!



Pictured: Aldenham School Book Festival

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Report insight – the biggest risks facing independent schools

The results from the latest Independent Schools Risk Barometer have been published. But what key risks have been identified? Customer Segment Director from report authors, Ecclesiastical Insurance, Laura Carter, shares some of the main findings from the 250 schools survey¹...

We found the biggest concerns for independent school leaders are the costs of maintaining school buildings (22%), managing the mental health and wellbeing of pupils (21%), and recruitment and retention of teachers (20%). The cost-of-living crisis (19%), managing mental health and wellbeing of staff (19%), and school inspections (19%) are also key concerns for the sector.

The Independent Schools Risk Barometer 2024 explores the top risks within the independent education sector and focuses on key areas of concern including managing mental health and wellbeing, mergers and acquisitions, and school building safety. Here are some of the key takeaways.

Mergers and Acquisitions

The majority (64%) of independent schools are open to considering a merger or acquisition in the future.

Improved financial stability (44%), improved facilities (40%), and cost and resource efficiency leading to improved margins (38%) were cited as the top benefits of mergers and acquisitions for their schools.

Dilution of the school brand and loss of school identity (42%) and loss of students from parents removing their children from the school (41%) were seen as the biggest risks of mergers and acquisitions.

Mergers and acquisitions can present opportunities and challenges for the independent education sector. It is important that schools considering future mergers and acquisitions review their liabilities and check they have the correct cover and risk mitigation in place.

When approaching a merger or acquisition, it is important to consider how the current insurance portfolio of the school will change. This may mean considering additional covers or taking on a type of risk which may not have been managed previously such as a heritage building. Whilst these challenges can be addressed, having a clear view of the new insurance portfolio from the start is important.

Teacher mental health

Independent schools are facing an increase in staff mental health issues. Half of independent schools have seen an increase in teacher

anxiety (48%) and stress (47%) during the past 12 months. Two in five (40%) have also reported an increase in teacher depression.

The top contributing factors to teacher mental health challenges are financial pressures (38%), increased workloads (32%), the pressure to deliver good results (30%), and taking more work home (30%).

Financial pressures are putting teachers under strain and exacerbating mental health issues in the sector.

Understanding the pressures being faced by staff and having mechanisms in place to support and address these challenges are vitally important to provide safe and healthy work environments.

Pupil mental health

Independent schools are also reporting an increase in pupil mental health issues. Half have seen an increase in pupil stress (49%) and anxiety (47%) during the past 12 months, representing a steep rise since the pandemic.

Two in five have also witnessed an increase in body image issues (43%) and depression (41%) among



Laura Carter

pupils, up sharply on previous years.

The top contributing factors to poor pupil mental health were peer pressure to fit in (33%), unrealistic body images portrayed on social media/mainstream media (33%), and dysfunctional home life (32%).

In the same way as teacher mental health, understanding the pressures and challenges facing pupils and putting in place mechanisms to address them will support a school's role of providing a safe and nurturing environment.

We hope The Independent Schools Risk Barometer 2024 will encourage independent schools to think about the risks they may face and how best to protect their organisations for the future. For more information visit www.ecclesiastical.com/educationbarometer

¹ The survey was commissioned by Ecclesiastical Insurance and conducted by OnePoll with 250 UK independent school leaders (including bursars, head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of departments) 8 – 14 February 2024.

Alternative election

Pupils from across the Loughborough Schools Foundation, Leicestershire, have been busy polishing their political platforms at the recently held LSF Alternative Election 2024.

As part of the process, pupils elected their own party leaders for each school from Years 11 and 12 who represent the parties standing in pupils' local constituencies, Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Reform and the Green Party.

Supported by their own campaign teams, the party leaders have been using the 'real life' parties' policies

to push their campaigns through the production of promotional materials including posters, balloons, rosettes and flags.

The LSF Alternative election took place with votes being cast at polling stations, prior to which Hustings assemblies took place at Loughborough Amherst School, Loughborough Grammar School and Loughborough High School. Party leaders gave a one-minute campaign speech on the real manifesto policies of their party and took questions from the audience.

Whilst the alternative election

provided a lot of fun for the pupils, it has also raised awareness of the real election and the political issues at play in this historic process.

Politics Teacher at Loughborough Grammar School, Miss Sarra Jenkins, was behind the organisation of the event. She said: "Our pupils are campaigning on real party policies from this election, and they have had to create their own campaign materials and take part in hustings in front of students from Year 7 to Year 13.

In doing so, they raise awareness not only of party-political issues,



The selected party leaders for the LSF Alternative Election

but of the importance of political education more broadly and exercising the franchise. In an age of mis- and dis-information, we want to ensure that students are excited and engaged by the political landscape, but are also critically analytical citizens who can look beyond the headlines."

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How to get to net-zero affordably

We all know that schools need to get to net-zero, sooner or later. Key to this is getting rid of the in-house fossil fuel systems. That cannot be done without significant expenditure, but can it be done affordably?

Yes, but it requires careful planning. It requires what we commonly now call an estate decarbonisation plan (EDP); but the EDP needs to be structured in the right way, if the phasing out of the fossil fuel systems is to be rendered affordable. The process is:

First: through careful study of the layout and current condition of the school estate, its known and potential future developments, its energy usage, and the pros and cons of the available low-carbon

technologies, define the net-zero overall technical solution for the school site. In other words, what should the estate infrastructure be in 15 to 20 years' time when the job has been done: when all the heat, transport and power functions have been rendered free of fossil fuels? And what will that cost?

Next: develop a plan to get from the current baseline to that net-zero overall technical solution as efficiently as possible. 'Efficiently' in this instance means not wasting time or money on technical dead-ends or expensive mistakes, achieving the best possible value for money, minimising the inevitable disruption around the school estate so that the school

can continue to function fully as an educational establishment, and not stretching the school's finances to such an extent that it runs out of cash. Managing the cashflow is going to be a big part of this endeavour.

The efficient EDP includes two subordinate plans:

1. An enabling plan (EP) that focuses on reducing energy usage/operating costs and lays the foundation for later work.
2. A main decarbonisation plan (MDP) that focuses on phasing out the fossil fuel systems. Invariably this part of the plan will be shaped by the design-concept for converting the heating plant.



Nigel Aylwin-Foster

The underlying logic is that the school should start by reducing its energy demand, both annual volume of usage and peak demands, because this will reduce its operating costs and – as important – reduce the scale of low-carbon alternatives eventually required as replacements for the fossil fuel systems. That matters: low-carbon heat technologies are expensive to install, so reducing the capacity required will have a significant impact on the capital outlay.

If you'd like to know more about how this works, please get in touch.

Nigel Aylwin-Foster is Business Development Director at ReEnergise: nigel@reenergisegroup.com

'Head for heights'

Wrekin Old Hall Trust, Shropshire, has launched work to install solar panels on four of its key buildings in a bid to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

The project will see panels installed on the Sports Hall, Business School and Music School at Wrekin College and on the main Old Hall School building.

With work expected to be completed by the end of the summer, the Trust aims to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere each year, as well as reducing the schools' energy bills.

Toby Spence, Executive Head of the Wrekin Old Hall Trust, who is a keen climber, celebrated the new project on the sports hall roof.

He said: "It is very exciting to see solar panels being installed across our campus this term, which is just one part of an overall commitment to being an eco-friendly school and doing all we can to better look after the planet, while teaching our pupils all about the importance of sustainability.

Pictured: Executive Head Toby Spence on the sports hall roof



"In terms of energy, we consume an average of about 130kW an hour, with peaks and troughs, so at peak generation we will be fully self-sufficient."

Work to install the panels on the Sports Hall has already started with the project moving to the Business School and then to the Music School and Old Hall.

The move comes at a time when national projects have been launched to see more schools install solar panels by organisations such as the National Grid and Solar for Schools.

Solving sustainability challenges

More than 130 students and teachers from seven Girls' Day School Trust schools have taken part in a sustainability event at the University College of London's MechSpace building. Designed to inspire girls to develop a passion for sustainability and STEM subjects so that they can go on to pursue science and engineering careers and bring diversity and fresh ideas to these fields, the event was hosted by Dr. Nelia Jurado Pontes, Associate Professor at UCL Mechanical Engineering Department and an Environmental Technologies specialist.

The MechSpace event gave students in Years 7 to 13 who are part of their respective schools' eco-committees an opportunity to learn about different aspects of

sustainability and how a science-based approach can overcome complex challenges. Girls from GDST's Belvedere, Brighton, Bromley, Nottingham, Streatham & Clapham, South Hampstead, and Blackheath schools also interacted with engineering professionals, students, PhD candidates and UCL professors on the day.

The MechSpace event is part of the GDST's Energy programme. It aims to educate everyone at the GDST about the importance of behaviour change in reducing energy use and carbon emissions as a key sustainability goal to mitigate climate change. It encourages all schools to work together to improve their energy efficiency as part of the GDST's Net Zero Carbon 2050 target.



Pictured: GDST students at The MechSpace event

Spoken English festival

A spoken English festival has returned to Shropshire with students from a number of schools across the county battling it out in a bid to have the last word.

The Viva Voce Spoken English Festival, which was held for the first-time last year, saw pupils from The Corbet School and Lakelands Academy head to Ellesmere College, which

hosted and took part in the competition.

Zoe Fisher, who will be taking over as Head of English at Ellesmere College from September, set up the competition alongside current Head of English Daniel Bottom. She said: "We wanted to promote and celebrate the power of spoken language and are delighted with how the event is developing.

"The level of competition this year was of the highest standard and in each category of poetry recital, dramatic reading and presentation of an issue, the judging panel was impressed by the depth of research and quality of speech demonstrated by the performers."

This year's judging panel consisted of Anne Wignall, former Mayor of Ellesmere and current President of Age UK Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, and her daughter Catherine Wignall, who is a screenwriter, as well as one student from each competing school. Judges said their task had not been easy but they gave each competitor feedback on their performance. Nina Fisher, who is in year 10 Ellesmere College, won the poetry recitation competition.

Pictured: All competitors of the Viva Voce Spoken English Festival

New for this year's festival was the Trefanenko Cup, named after the College's current Head Girl Oksana Trefanenko. Oksana joined College in September 2022 as a Ukrainian Scholar. It is awarded to the student who demonstrates outstanding ability during the competition and this year's winner was Francesca Widdon from The Corbet School.

In addition, for the first time this year two media students, Freddie Prust from Ellesmere College and Joe Holland from The Corbet School covered the competition and wrote a media release about it to be shared amongst the communities of the three schools.

Any schools interested in participating next year should email Zoe on:
zoe.fisher@ellesmere.com



Advertorial Feature

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You can also watch a recent webinar we held with Voice 21, on *Making the connection between oracy and reading*, on our oracy page.

Unlocking potential: the lifelong benefits of sports in school

We've long known that sports are beneficial to young people's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, but recent studies are revealing powerful benefits that transcend the school experience, to bring lifelong rewards.



The development of lifelong positive attributes

New research undertaken by Manchester Metropolitan University on behalf of the Youth Sports Trust and HMC (The Head's Conference) reveals that as well as being associated with higher levels of mental wellbeing, participation in sport is a significant predictor of self-belief and mental toughness.

So, the skills learnt on the field are helping young people form mental attitudes and belief systems that are empowering



them for life. In addition, playing team sports also boosts self-esteem, inspires team work, and encourages the building of valuable leadership and communication skills.

A point of differentiation

With so many benefits to be gained, it's little wonder that a strong sporting curriculum and facilities top many parents and students' wish lists when shortlisting schools.

So, how can you make your facilities stand out and prove that your school has the approach to sport that will enable young people to gain maximum benefit from all that sports participation can offer?

- Make your facilities all weather – according to Statista, 2023 saw rain fall on 171 days in the UK. But rain doesn't have to stop play. All-weather canopies can now be built to

span huge areas including netball courts, MUGAs and even cricket nets, so that your pupils can benefit from sports every day of the school year.

- Enable crowd participation – young people benefit from seeing their sporting efforts recognised and celebrated, while parents enjoy seeing their child's progress, so providing weather protected spectator areas is another way to ensure your facilities meet the grade.
- Offer something unique – and if you're really wanting to stand out, why not offer something that sets you apart? Padel tennis is one of the fastest growing sports in the UK and with good reason. A cross between tennis and squash, it's a fast paced, highly skilled game that provides a full workout on a smaller court



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Inspiring connection and resilience through the beauty of art

How can art help pupils to connect with the world and beyond as well as build resilience and determination? Head of Art at York House School, Hertfordshire, Elaine Fraser, looks at why the subject is about much more than just paints and brushes.

Art is a rich form of visual communication which allows even very small children to express themselves in a completely unique, highly personal language while also giving them the tools to interpret meaning in the artwork of others. As in all things, the earlier this skill is acquired and the greater and broader the exposure to art is, the more beneficial it is to the individual in becoming a proficient artistic 'linguist'.

Art teaches children many life skills too; from empathy, self-expression and introspection to the celebration of differences, communication, inclusivity, critical analysis, self-confidence, open-mindedness and eloquence in formulating and communicating opinions. During art lessons, pupils also experience the freedom of not being right or wrong in an educational setting and being able to articulate an intelligent and considered response. In addition to this, the practical side of the subject helps children to develop observational skills, concentration, resilience, fine motor-skills, tenacity, proficiency in self-evaluation and peer assessment. Pupils learn to problem-solve and importantly, to develop an imaginative response - something that many of our media-immersed and visually fed generation of young people find increasingly difficult to access in themselves alone.

Removing the fear of right and wrong

Art helps pupils to connect with the world around them and my mantra in class is that to be a true artist, you need to see and not merely look. This infers a requirement for a deeper understanding of the subject, visually of course, but also intellectually. It is this level of

personal connection that an artist is looking to convey or to elicit in the viewer; a connection with, and interpretation of, the world which goes beyond the superficial. Because art is subjective, there is the freedom for pupils to make considered judgements in a very personal way without fear of being wrong. These reactions and reflections then form the basis of the practical side of the subject; creating unique and insightful artworks.

Art may be a creative subject, but it is equally a highly philosophical and academic subject too, even though by default, it is often viewed solely as a practical application or skill set. If we take the definition of an academic subject as being a scholarly pursuit; analysis, investigation, critical rigour, innovation and communication being key components, then the study of art encapsulates all of these. The inclusion of the history of art, which is imbued throughout the art curriculum alongside the subjects' practical application, requires pupils to consider societal, historical, cultural and political issues with conceptual depth. It is no coincidence that the art department is a relevant and easily facilitated inclusion on nearly all cross-curricular trips. The study of art is truly all-encompassing and the realisation in students that 'Art is Everything and Everywhere' is always a feeling of accomplishment as a teacher.

Possibly the most important and personally gratifying aspect of teaching art to children is helping to develop and guide their recognition, acceptance and celebration of being an individual. Encouraging self-awareness and self-confidence in expression, as well as empathy and understanding

of others' right to approach and see things differently, encourages resilience against the pressures of conformity in these times of social media, but also in creating empathetic and open-minded future adults.

Diversity and inclusivity

The art curriculum has developed and broadened exponentially since I began teaching and has, happily, moved away from the slightly formulaic acquisition of practical skills to embrace a wider spectrum of both artists, art genres and materials. The inclusion of art history into all aspects of the practical curriculum is integral to both the understanding of the subject and fully realising the subject's potential in education. A more diverse and inclusive art curriculum which includes the age-appropriate study of art and artists from a range of backgrounds teaches the importance of equality and respect whilst also creating a rich base of experience. The importance of having an open-minded, progressive and trusting senior leadership team in the setting of a modern art curriculum is essential and cannot be overstated.

Art can also benefit children who might not feel as naturally gifted as some. Picasso's view that 'every child is an artist' certainly rings true. Young children, almost without exception, enjoy being creative without fear of judgement and continuing to embrace that individuality and creativity, whether in practical or intellectual terms, is of utmost importance in leading a fulfilling existence. The requirement to produce photo-realistic images as the only conduit to being considered 'good at art' is, thankfully, an educational mind-set of the past. Creativity looks different for each individual



and it is helping a child to discover, develop and celebrate that individuality, which is the daily joy of an art teacher's vocation.

Cultural immersion and practical exploration

Art at York House aims to create an exciting culture of artistic experience and expression. We run an annual 'Reflection' project across a number of year groups which requires pupils to reflect on a given question and then add their illustrated response to a collaborative artwork in the grounds. Year 6 study expressionism and create highly sensitive and insightful creative responses which portray a range of feelings. Years 7 and 8 study the legacy of Jean-Michel Basquiat and the rise of the street art genre, culminating in a workshop session and an artist-led tour of East London's vibrant and diverse street art scene.

Our older pupils are challenged to consider the varying philosophies of art and begin to piece together their learning regarding the evolution of art across the centuries. Year 8 hold heated, informed and impressive debates arguing the merits of conceptual art versus realism. Co-curricular trips to the British Museum link art to antiquity and art's place in war is considered, alongside history and ICT, at the Imperial War Museum. In essence, at school, through cultural immersion and practical exploration, we look to expand the pupils' personal response to the central and perennial question - what is art?



Triathlon fundraiser

One thousand children came together at Cranleigh School, Surrey, to take part in the Knight Frank Schools Triathlon fundraising event. In teams of four, they swam, cycled and ran, so far raising over £100,887 for Restless Development and other charities chosen by the participating schools.

Cranleigh has hosted the event since 2017. It is a community

centred day, with local businesses and over 2,000 attendees coming together, with volunteers and Cranleigh pupils giving up their Sundays to ensure the event ran smoothly.

This is a national series organised by global youth charity, Restless Development. This year 10,000 pupils will be taking part to raise over £1 million; which will help to support over 100 charities.

Pictured: Fundraising team The Hot Chilly's who raised £1,165

Can transport help schools navigate the VAT storm ahead?

Whilst the impact of VAT on fees is a concern for many schools, it's crucial to plan ahead. Transport is one area that can help schools reduce costs and retain student admission levels.

Reducing costs

The daily school bus can benefit greatly from an efficiency review. Manually issuing bus passes, taking paper registers, fielding calls when the bus is late and handling individual payments are all costly administrative jobs.

Without ongoing data capture and analysis, schools often overpay for transport that is inefficiently utilised. Add in a further layer of expense with a transport broker and bills get costly.

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mobile), bookings, payments, reporting, safeguarding features, service alerts and vehicle tracking into a simple, affordable system. Giving staff the right tools for the job is a small change that yields a big return.

Retaining student admissions

Whilst there has been talk about students leaving for state education, less has been said about switching to another independent school with lower fees. A quality transport experience could make all the difference for parents that are now evaluating their choice of school. Transport is still VAT zero-rated.

Promoting benefits of a system like ShuttleID to prospective students and parents could be key in helping retain and increase admission levels. ShuttleID adds value to the school proposition by reassuring parents that school travel is safe, convenient and reliable.




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Digital media and the adolescent

The debate around excessive or problematic social media use for adolescents continues to rage on. In an update to an article published in this title seven years ago, Wellbeing and educational consultant and coach, Beth Kerr, and clinical psychologist, Dr Bettina Hohnen, provide some fresh insights.



In 2017, I wrote an article for the Independent Schools Magazine, titled – ‘No-one realised smoking was bad for you in the 60’s’, drawing the comparison between cigarettes and social media. In my article, I used terms like ‘pernicious’ and ‘nefarious’ to describe the potential impact of unchecked overconsumption of digital media on adolescent brain development.

I re-write that article today, mindful that my original approach was rather monolithic and focused on the role of technology as the primary determinant of adolescent outcomes. I did not discern enough between individuals or different elements of social media, nor did I acknowledge the power of digital agency in positively leveraging social media or gaming.

Ironically, the author Jon Haidt, whose current book ‘The Anxious Generation’ was the No.1 Sunday Times best seller in April 2024, would have probably loved my article. He writes about the ‘great rewiring of childhood’ and describes the impact of a phone based childhood on adolescent mental health in catastrophic terms. It is a compelling read, has stimulated important debate across the globe, and it is true that many parents have a real sense of unease around how smartphones (given the opportunity) dominate their children’s attention. It is also true to say that many school leaders would agree that dealing with the fallout of social media and WhatsApp messages dominate the attention of their pastoral teams. I should like to have seen more causal explanations for correlational data. I seemed to me that he was selective in presenting the data and omitted other potential explanations for

Pictured: Beth Kerr

findings (e.g. changes in the way data was collected) and proposing reforms without due consideration of their impacts on children of different ages. For those interested in understanding more, the article ‘Do smartphones really cause mental illness among adolescents? Ten problems with Jonathan Haidt’s book’¹ is excellent.

The longing for simple solutions, top tips and time limits is palpable among parents, educators, and even young people themselves, but unfortunately, Pandora is out of her box, and we now have to work out how to live with her. One of Haidt’s 4 magic solutions highlights the impracticality of such ‘solutions’ all too well:

‘No social media until 16’... Ok, so how exactly is this going to work? Those born early in the academic year will get access first (having never had it before) in Year 11, at a time when they have to be incredibly focused to succeed in exams that will have a profound impact on their future. Those born later in the year will be left out, or given the strength of the innate drive to fit in with their peers, will more likely spend a disproportionate amount of time circumnavigating the security settings to also gain access to their friends’ cyber networking spaces. Those who don’t manage it, or whose parents win the inevitable and combative battle for now, will gain access just before or during their actual GCSE’s. Some children will leave home and/or school at 16 – having just gained access to the most powerful networking tool in the world – and left to work it out on their own... without any guidance from parents or trusted adults. This highlights so clearly to me that Professor Andrew Przybylski is right:

‘Bans and arbitrary limits have once again been proposed as

solutions to complex social and technical challenges of raising young people and keeping them safe. These sound attractive but are not workable or effective in practice.’

This does beg the question, if bans, (which might of course, be intuitively appealing for adults) are not effective, then what is?

1. Focus on habits & boundaries:

- Move away from seeking simple fixes and accept that optimising digital use is an ongoing life skill that needs to be taught
- As with all life skills, building healthy habits is a sustainable and effective way of making positive changes towards one’s goals – digital habits are no different
- Clear, firm and communicated boundaries support habit formation

2. Focus on the individual and distinct developmental stages:

- Separate approaches to ‘children’ (8-10yrs), ‘young adolescents’ (11-14yrs) and ‘older adolescents’ (15-18yrs)’ in this whole debate
- Understand that the way a platform, game or interface is perceived, interpreted and used by the individual will have a significant impact on its effect on them
- Understand that during adolescence, social media can amplify the impact that common adolescent developmental mechanisms (behavioural, cognitive and neurobiological) have on mental health

3. Make digital agency the goal:

- Engage in the research and evidence to inform discussion with young people around their tech use (this discussion should

avoid lumping all ‘tech use’ together)

- Encourage adolescents to continually review and reflect on the impact of their digital habits on their mood, productivity and overall wellbeing (e.g. What will the use of this technology encourage me to notice/ignore? ‘The Frailest Thing: Ten Years of Thinking About the Meaning of Technology’ – L.M. Sarcasas).
- Provide a non-judgemental space for them to discuss their own challenges and ideas around their technology use

As psychologist Candice Odgers emphasises – all adolescents will eventually need to know how to safely navigate online spaces, so shutting off or restricting access to smartphones and social media is unlikely to work in the long term².

And so, for version 2 of my 2017 article, I would be inclined to change the title, maybe to:

‘No-one thought eating (too much, refined) sugar (without cleaning your teeth, being active) was bad for you in the 60’s’.

Admittedly, this is not as snappy, but it does at least capture that sugar can be natural or processed, some is ok, too much is not, it will impact you differently after exercise to before, if you are diabetic or not, if you brush your teeth or you don’t, if you are a toddler or a teenager etc.

There is no such nuance about smoking, no ‘safe’ number of cigarettes you can smoke or a certain type that is positive for health and wellbeing in any way, it is black and white...two words you would be unlikely to ever use to describe the relationship between adolescents and the way they use digital media.

¹ Do smartphones really cause mental illness among adolescents? Ten problems with Jonathan Haidt’s book; London School of Economics: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/parenting4digitalfuture/2024/05/15/haidt>

² Online child safety laws could help or hurt – 2 pediatricians explain what’s likely to work and what isn’t; The Conversation Apr 4 2024: <https://theconversation.com/online-child-safety-laws-could-help-or-hurt-2-pediatricians-explain-whats-likely-to-work-and-what-isnt-226436>

brain – version 2... seven years on



Puberty sets off activation of several important changes in key brain areas, which we can think of as the final brain

'upgrade' to set the young person up for adulthood. In that 10–15-year period (between puberty and mid-20s) the brain is on a unique setting with certain key 'tasks' and drives that are biologically driven. As discussed in my book *The Incredible Teenage Brain* (2019, written with Jane Gilmour and Tara Murphy), this has resulted in a seismic shift in our perception and understanding of young people. Adolescence has come to be viewed as a time of great opportunity as well as great social and emotional sensitivity, with enormous potential for change.

There are a few key ways that teen brain settings interact with social media that adults need to be aware of. The first is the drive to integrate with peers and explore one's self-identity in the social hierarchies of life. This means teens are highly sensitive to social feedback and have a strong desire to belong to a group as they are searching for who they are in the larger world. They

Pictured: Dr Bettina Hohnen

do this in the online world as much as in the real world and we must remember when they say they can't live without their phone what they are really saying is that they can't live without their friends – their friends are on their phone. It doesn't mean we give them the phone all the time, but we must appreciate its importance as we guide their use.

Teen self-identity is also being shaped online in both good ways (teens can find like-minded groups in the wider world) and potentially harmful ways (seeking perfect reflections of themselves). Each reflection back to a teen leaves a far greater neural mark than it does a child or an adult and in the world of social media, metrics such as likes or follows matter.

Adolescents have a natural proclivity to explore new situations and try things they haven't done before, otherwise known as risk taking. Again, this can be a good thing (extending themselves to unknown territories to travel, learn new skills or stand up for what they believe in) or a bad thing (putting themselves in danger). The potential for exposure to unknown risks is far greater online than in the real world

and it helps guide both our thinking and our teens when we think of it this way – what skills do teens need to wander the world alone? Moreover, research shows teens are more likely to make a reward-driven decision (as opposed to a rational decision) when with peers, increasing the potential risk to harm online.

Other changes in the brain include a robust drive for independence and autonomy, often characterised by a strong desire to "do it my way", along with heightened emotional experiences and intense reactions to content. Some experts suggest that these brain states may increase the likelihood of teenagers believing "fake" news, becoming susceptible to dangerous influences, and being easily led astray by others.

So what can we do? Current research reveals limited definitive conclusions about relationship between social media use and wellbeing, but it does indicate that both the complete absence of social media use and excessive engagement are associated with reduced well-being. Simply banning social media or vilifying it is ineffective and counterproductive. Instead, we need to take note

of the brain science to guide us. First, understand teen motives and honour their need for social integration and a drive for new adventures. This is happening online for this generation and is an essential part of their development. Second, while leaving teens to find their own way without guidance or boundaries is not recommended, we have to think about how we communicate with teens to take into account their drive for independence and autonomy.

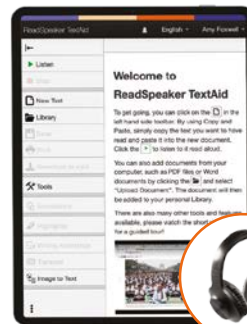
In my opinion, the most powerful tool we have is our relationship with them, which we can use to help them to be reflective about their screen use, develop a critical view of content and strengthen their brain circuits for self-regulation. We must curate calm, curious and open structured spaces with young people that should be regular, non-judgemental and teen-led. It's through these conversations and within their trusting relationship with us that they can explore their own experience and generate self-led rituals and routines with our guidance, which can act as their internal guide when we aren't watching.

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-Vicky Plant

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Profile

In conversation with Alexandra Haydon

Born:

May 1977 in London

Married:

Yes – to Duncan, an equine vet

Children:

Two girls, one 14 and one 13

Schools and Universities attended:

Sherborne Girls, Durham University (BSc Zoology); Oxford University (PGCE and MSc); Bath University (PG Dip)

First Job:

Market research for pharmaceutical companies in London

First job in independent education:

Head of Science at St Mary's Calne

Appointed to the current job:

January 2024

Favourite piece of music:

Chasing Cars by Snow Patrol

Favourite food:

Squashed avocado on toast

Favourite drink:

Mojito (plus umbrella)

Favourite holiday destination:

Pembrokeshire (when sunny!)

Favourite leisure pastime:

Family walks with the dog

Favourite TV or radio programme/series:

Race Across the World – we were so inspired that we organised two of our own against another family. Last year we have raced from London to Dubrovnik and this year from Berlin to Istanbul – we loved every minute!

Suggested epitaph:

No thanks! I would rather be sprinkled...

Q You are now completing your second term of headship, having joined Francis Holland, Sloane Square, in January. What has been the biggest surprise to date?

A Each school has their own traditions, but I think the FHS school birthday was really something else! We were 143 on 1st March this year – the whole school put daffodils everywhere (including stunning daffodil-festooned hair dos for our younger girls). There was a Talent Show, exuberant school birthday karaoke, cupcakes in our school birthday colours and a joyous ceremonial cake cutting and performance of "Happy Birthday, Dear FHS"! It's an event that really epitomised the unrivalled sense of community and belonging we have here.

Q Your school was founded by Francis Holland, Canon of Canterbury Cathedral and Chaplain to Queen Victoria and Edward VII, but was really the brainchild of his wife, Sybilla. Is she a role model for today's pupils?

A She definitely is. One of our key aims is for pupils to learn not to fear failure and to stand up for what they believe, in order to achieve their fullest potential, realise their dreams and make a positive difference in the world.

When Sybilla Holland worked with her husband to found our school in 1881, she was the perfect example of this aim. She had a vision to empower young women with the knowledge and skills to change the world in a way their brothers hoped to. As well as personifying our values of love, compassion and service, she was not afraid to stand up for what she believed in and really challenge societal perceptions in order to make a difference.

This vision has been powerfully realised over the decades, and is evident every day in our school community. I've been so impressed by the number of student led outreach initiatives I have seen since starting as Head, as well as the many philanthropic endeavours of our staff, parents and alumni community. The girls learn to stand up for fairness, and emerge as young women that are strong, capable, and caring leaders who Sybilla Holland would be immensely proud of.

Q The school has a bronze replica statue of 'Fearless Girl' which you describe as an iconic image for girls' education. How so?

A The FHS Fearless Girl greets me every morning when I walk into school. Just like the original by Kristen Visbal in New York, our bronze replica captures the belief that young women should face challenge head on and use the power of their mind, voice and talent to make their mark in the constantly evolving world of tomorrow. And in this world, what could be more important?

This is such an iconic image for girls' education for many reasons. The importance of taking risks and learning from failure empowers pupils to push themselves, explore their interests and passions, achieve extraordinary things and grow into confident, empathetic and adaptable adults. It also helps us defeat the perfectionism that is so prevalent amongst high achieving girls, which is so toxic and can lead to years of self-doubt.

At Francis Holland, our pupils are constantly urged to 'do it scared', and the development of resilience has been behind the emphasis on courage, creativity, collaboration and curiosity. During initiatives such as our annual Expeditions Week, which takes place under canvas and on boats, bicycles, surfboards (the list goes on!) for all pupils to learn bushcraft and teamwork, girls are encouraged to step out of their comfort zones and learn from failures.

I see tangible evidence of the success of this approach during my chats at breaktimes and lunchtimes with our pupils, where again and again I see them boldly putting forward their ideas without constraints. They feel confident within their community, they feel known and they feel valued for their individuality – and that sense of security is so liberating.

Q Your background is in science teaching and in 2017 as Head of Science you led St Marys, Calne, to become the first school to receive the Platinum Science Mark. Two years later you won an award for innovation. How are you getting your girls as enthused about STEM subjects as you are? Do you still teach?

A We are so lucky at FHS to have a really brilliant STEAM programme (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and

Mrs Alexandra Haydon (MSc Oxon, BSc Durham) is Head of Francis Holland School, Sloane Square London. She was previously Deputy Head, Academic, at Millfield, Somerset.



Maths) led by dedicated teachers. This term alone has seen a trip to NASA's Space Station in Houston – where they had the unexpected bonus of seeing the total eclipse! – for Years 9 and 10, the 'FHS Earthshot Competition' which has been crafted for the girls to have a greater appreciation of the wider world and the environmental impact we're having, construction of a Greenpower Go Kart with 800 pupil-made components for our partner primary school, St Barnabas', and weekly STEAM 'Lunch 'n Learns' where we invite STEAM professionals and FHS staff to speak to pupils about exciting topics including the possibility of time travel, explaining why we got to see the Northern Lights, the realities of a career in medicine and the strategies needed in chess!

I don't have a regular timetable but I still do teach from time to time, which I love. The A in STEAM is really important to me – the skills that you learn in the arts subjects such as creativity, communication, analysis and argumentation are the skills that allow important ideas to be communicated, debated and understood. Next year we will be hosting a year long cultural event on Climate Change, showcasing the importance of interdisciplinary work in this area. I want girls to feel enthused by all the wonderful subjects we offer at the school and know that they are relevant and valuable beyond school.

Q As part of your MSc in Learning and Teaching from University of Oxford, you have published research on promoting students' questions in class. What was your key finding? How have you incorporated this into teaching practice?

A My research looked at the benefits of students asking questions for both teaching and for learning. In many classrooms, it is the teachers' questions that tend to dominate, but it is the questions from the students, especially the higher order thinking questions, that can really unlock a concept for both the individual and for the class, driving learning forward.

Sometimes we just expect students to know how to ask good questions, but this is often not the case. I looked at mechanisms to help teach

students to ask better questions in class as well as possible barriers to the students asking questions – the outcomes of the research became central to my work as a teacher, Head of Department, Academic Deputy and now Head. It has been invaluable.

Q As an alternative to the traditional exam week, in the summer Years 7 to 9 take part in TIPS (Thinking Innovatively and Problem Solving) week. What is the outline of the programme, and how do you measure effectiveness?

A TIPS Week (Thinking Innovatively and Problem-Solving) is a vibrant 3 day festival of workshops unique to Francis Holland which are specially designed for Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils. The workshops aim to challenge and inspire our girls to tackle a diverse set of problems in groups, and individually, with an emphasis on our 7 C's: Confidence, Commitment, Craftsmanship, Communication, Curiosity, Collaboration and Creativity.

Year 7 and 8 TIPS Week has been running for nearly a decade. Girls enjoy over 20 hugely varied workshops which vary year on year and in 2024 included Bank Heist Escape Room, Podcasting, First Aid, Self Defence, Minecraft Architecture, Dissection, 'Tik Tok, Gen Z and Happiness', Young Film Academy, Stage Make Up and Scottish Reeling! These encourage girls to be fearless and challenge themselves, discover new interests and develop the 7 Cs in all that they do.

TIPS Week has also recently been introduced for Year 9, in addition to an exam week, where girls present Earthshot presentations – in a UN style showcase asking a panel of judges for funding – and take part in a variety of trips and workshops which aim to further develop their 7 Cs and build on skills they have learnt in Years 7 & 8.

Effectiveness is measured in the quality of their outcomes (high!) during the week, the level of engagement during the activities and in their evaluative reflections that take place over the course of the week. The removal of exams and introduction of TIPS has correlated with improvement in GCSE grades. Whilst correlation may not be causation, removing exam pressure,

creating space for creativity and encouraging girls to take risks and have a go fosters a tangible culture of high ambition.

Q You are keen on preparing young women for working life in a fast-changing, technological world. Is such preparation different from that needed to get boys down the same road?

A Of course, each child forges their own individual path, taking away their own unique interpretation of their Futures programme, irrespective of their gender. However, speaking generally, we do find that the preparation needed for girls relates to self-belief and confidence in themselves, assertiveness to speak up, a sense of belonging, and a willingness to make mistakes, fail, and go again. All girls' education offers crucial opportunities for this, as it gives them space.

We find that girls are often excellent collaborators and team players and we look to nurture these traits in initiatives such as TIPS Week and Expeditions Week. Our Junior School is moving off site from September and a large portion of the resultant additional space will be turned into "The Collaboration Space". The creation of this new space is the first in a series of developments that will inspire our girls' natural creativity, increase their thirst for knowledge and further develop their skills, all so crucial in this age where versatility, innovation and the ability to connect and collaborate are essential qualities.

Q You also strive to encourage girls 'to make, and to be, the difference in society'. Is this a greater or lesser challenge in a single-sex independent school like yours than it would be in the less affluent setting of a maintained secondary school?

A I don't think it matters who you are, or what background you are from, or what type of school that you go to – we need our young people to have agency; to believe that when they speak up, people will listen, people will care what they say and that they can make a difference in the world.

Continued >

Profile In conversation with Alexandra Haydon (continued)

At FHS I want all the girls to feel that they belong, deeply, in our community. If you feel that you belong, you are truly known and you are valued for your individuality, you will feel more invested in change for the future. I want the girls to have an opportunity to challenge and influence authority, and to experience careful listening and understanding from the adults in charge. If they learn that they can be the difference in school, then we are setting them up to be the change makers of the future – Fearless Girls, through and through.

Q As a Church of England foundation the school today maintains its Christian ethos whilst still welcoming students from all faith backgrounds. How do you ensure the religious aspects of the school are fully inclusive?

A Reverend van der Hart, our chaplain, supports girls of all faith backgrounds in our school community, as well as teaching about the Christian faith. She is a key member of the school's pastoral team and girls and staff members alike are invited to meet with her to talk, reflect on or pray about the challenges that life throws our way. We welcome those from all faiths or none and value a courageous, curious and respectful approach to the exploration of individual faith and the beliefs of others.

Inclusivity of pupils and staff of all faiths and none is encouraged in many ways, including active Jewish, Islamic and Dharmic Religious Societies. We also want our students to develop a strong understanding of faith that is different to their own. We have two equality, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) Ambassadors and an Interfaith Ambassador in our Head Girls' Team, as well as two staff EDIB leads, all of whom promote inclusivity and orchestrate events to educate pupils and staff about important issues.

In our multicultural – and sadly often fractured – world, developing mutual respect, valuing difference and learning to communicate effectively with all people are foundational life skills – and ones that we seek to generate and model within our FHS community.

Q You have been involved with various partnership projects over your career, taking the lead on this when at St Marys. Can you outline one project which has been of greatest inspiration to staff and students?

A At Millfield I was a governor of a local primary school that needed support with play in the playground and with reading/ maths in class. I had a group of about thirty keen sixth formers who would go down to the school on a regular

basis, read to the students, help in class or get groups playing football and learning new skills at lunchtime. It was a wonderful project to lead as it was based on both real need and a real willingness to help. One girl ended up applying to train as a primary teacher as a result of her time volunteering there, which was the icing on the cake.

Q Who or what inspired you to get into teaching? If you hadn't gone into education, what else might you have chosen to do?

A My first two years in proper work after university were in London doing market research for pharmaceutical companies and in my third year I moved to Barcelona to set up an office for the company there. I learnt a lot but I realised when I was out in Spain that I really wanted a job that had a social purpose. It was my flatmate out there that encouraged me to apply for teaching!

If I had not gone into education, I think I would have ended up in something that is related to healthcare. I am so pleased I made the move – I genuinely think teaching is the best job in the world. Schools are such places and forces of positivity, community and belonging; there is intellectual challenge every day, the work changes every day and watching children grow into inspirational young adults is such a joy.

Education Summit

Over 300 educators from across the UK gathered at the eighth annual Education Summit which has taken place at Bryanston School, Dorset. This year's theme, "The Times They Are A-Changing: Future Proof Your Teaching," inspired by Bob Dylan's iconic song, focused on embracing the ongoing changes taking place in the education system.

Throughout the day, a series of talks were delivered by expert speakers and leading educators addressing the evolution of education in a rapidly advancing digital world, against more traditional teaching methods.

Speaker Mary Myatt, an education adviser, writer, and former teacher, delivered a talk on the intellectual power of narrative, presenting

evidence that simply reading well-chosen books to children in the classroom significantly enhances their reading abilities. She emphasised that curiosity is a significant motivator for learning.

Amjad Ali, an experienced SENCo, gave a talk on inclusive teaching. He stressed the importance of the language teachers use with children, particularly the need to avoid labels.

Dan Fitzpatrick, known as 'The AI Educator', set delegates minds buzzing with a live investigation of various AI tools that could reduce teacher workload and help engage and inspire pupils, even producing an AI rap describing the event!

Reflecting on the overall event, Bryanston's Head, Richard Jones,



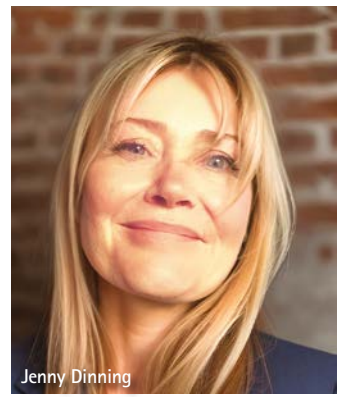
praised the unity of teaching colleagues from primary and secondary, state, and independent schools, especially in the context of the forthcoming General Election. "It is crucial for us all to come together to improve outcomes in our education settings. I sincerely hope that

politicians recognize the strength of this collaboration, harness this collective strength, and allow us to continue building on the many successful cross-sector partnerships that already exist. The priority is, and must always be, to help drive standards across all education for children in the UK."

Pictured: Amjad Ali speaking at the Bryanston Education Summit

The strategic role of independent school marketers in staff recruitment

Amidst concern of VAT on fees and falling numbers, the critical issue of attracting and retaining the right staff can often get overlooked. Director of Marketing and Admissions at Bootham School in York and AMCIS Board Member, Jenny Dinning, believes addressing this challenge is essential for ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of independent schools and considers how schools can harness the power of their marketing department when recruiting staff.



Those of us working in the UK independent school sector will be aware how difficult it is becoming to recruit and retain high quality staff. Specialist employment platforms and recruitment companies provide an excellent service by broadcasting your vacancies to the right audiences. But to ensure a return on what can be a hefty investment, your recruitment materials must stand out.

Enter the school marketer.

Traditionally confined to promoting the school's brand and managing admissions, today's marketers are stepping into a new arena – staff recruitment. As independent schools across the nation grapple with recruitment challenges, involving marketers in the hiring process can prove to be a strategic advantage for senior leadership teams and HR departments.

At the heart of successful staff recruitment lies the ability to effectively communicate the school's ethos, mission, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. This is precisely where the marketer excels. Nobody knows how to sell their school better. Through targeted messaging, engaging content, and strategic outreach, marketers can attract candidates who not only possess the requisite skills but also fit with the school's vision and values.

Moreover, marketers bring a fresh perspective to the recruitment process. By leveraging their knowledge of market trends, competitor analysis, and digital platforms, they can identify untapped talent pools and implement innovative recruitment campaigns that resonate with prospective candidates. Whether it's harnessing the power of social media, hosting virtual recruitment events, or crafting compelling employer branding initiatives, marketers are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of modern recruitment.

Recruitment is about more than producing a glossy brochure: it's about key messaging, explaining the ethos and values of the school in an authentic way, and highlighting the benefits. Marketers are adept at conveying this narrative, ensuring that potential candidates gain a clear and compelling understanding of what sets the school apart. This involves not only showcasing the academic achievements and facilities but also emphasizing the supportive community, opportunities for professional growth, and the school's commitment to holistic education.

However, the benefits of involving marketers in staff recruitment extend beyond this. Collaborating with senior leadership teams and HR departments, marketers can offer valuable insights into candidate personas, market dynamics, and employer branding strategies. Schools can develop comprehensive recruitment strategies that are both data-driven and human-centric. This integration ensures that the recruitment process is aligned with the school's strategic goals and cultural values, leading to better hiring decisions and improved staff retention.

Marketers can also enhance the school website and recruitment materials. Highlighting the school's unique selling points (USPs) is essential. This includes not only academic achievements and extracurricular opportunities but also the school's ethos, community spirit, and commitment to professional development.

Creating engaging multimedia content is a powerful tool. Videos, virtual tours, and photo galleries can bring the school's campus and culture to life, offering candidates a more immersive experience. Featuring interviews with current staff, highlights of school events, and day-in-the-life segments can give prospective candidates a

genuine feel for what it's like to be part of the school community.

Optimising the school's online presence for search engines (SEO) is another critical area. By ensuring that the school's website ranks highly for relevant keywords, marketers can attract more organic traffic from potential candidates. This involves creating dedicated landing pages for job openings, with clear and informative content that speaks directly to prospective applicants. Additionally, marketers can leverage digital marketing strategies, such as targeted social media campaigns and email marketing, to reach a wider audience.

Marketers can work with HR departments to ensure that the process of applying for positions

is straightforward and user-friendly. This includes providing clear instructions, downloadable application forms, and easy access to online application portals. Reducing unnecessary barriers in the application process can make a significant difference in attracting staff.

In the competitive landscape of staff recruitment, the role of the school marketer is indispensable. Their expertise in branding, communication, and strategic outreach can transform the recruitment process. By embracing their expertise and integrating them into the recruitment process, senior leadership teams and HR departments can gain a valuable ally in their quest to attract top talent and build thriving school communities.

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Never too soon to think ahead

Learning initiative

Fairfield Prep School, Leicestershire, has launched Fairfield Futures; a week-long learning initiative encouraging Year 6 pupils to begin considering life beyond school.

Led by Sarra Jenkins, Director of Future Pathways at Loughborough Grammar School, and Rachel Ferraby, Director of Clinical Applications also at LGS, Fairfield Futures was developed in response to latest research showing that pupils start thinking about, and even discounting certain universities and courses, from as early as Year 6.

Comprising a combination of presentations, skills workshops, interactive research sessions, and games, pupils learnt all about the various options available as post-18 pathways. Fairfield families also got involved to share their career journeys and experience; parents, including an

ophthalmologist, doctor, professor and lawyer, provided career summaries and took part in Q&As sessions with pupils.

Pupils also learnt about apprenticeship opportunities whilst getting stuck into the 'apprenticeshiparcade' games, and heard from Professor Griffiths from Loughborough University about a career in academic research, as well as Dr Fraser, a local General Practitioner. There was also an online talk from a geotechnical engineer.

Sarra said: "It's incredible that children as young as 10 and 11 are already making decisions about universities and courses. I'm so pleased to have led this unique initiative that helps educate these pupils on their career options so that they can be confident that the decisions they're making in the future are informed and based on shared experience."



Pictured: Pupils learning about being a geotechnical engineer



Futures Programme

Windlesham House, West Sussex has recently hosted the Royal Naval Divers from Delta Diving Unit 2, as part of the school's Futures Programme. Based in Portsmouth, the divers, who are part of the elite Diving & Threat Exploitation Group (DTXG), delivered an interactive session to the children. During their visit the divers explained how they are trained to conduct several tasks including disposing explosives of historic ordnance, defusing improvised explosive devices around the UK, clearing sea mines and combatting terrorists.

The session was led by Lieutenant Forster, who explained how the divers also carry out emergency underwater maintenance on warships and execute special operations as part of an elite team. After a Q&A session, where the children got to ask lots of questions, they were also given the opportunity to interact with a specialist diving kit, robotics equipment and a drone.

Headmaster at Windlesham House School, Ben Evans, explained, "Hearing from the Royal Naval Divers was an amazing experience

for our pupils. Learning experiences like these really help children to understand the array of career opportunities available to them in the wider world, and how working within important sectors like the armed services contributes to peace keeping as well as saving lives.

"We want our pupils to discover new things, we want to encourage curiosity and expand their horizons when considering their futures. Even some of the small activities we offer in school such as completing the PADI diving course or extending swimming ability are all great starting points to a much wider life experience that is full of opportunity."



Pictured: (top) Royal Naval Divers from Delta Diving Unit 2 (bottom) a pupil tries out a diving kit

Hands-on medicine experience

Bishop's Stortford College, Hertfordshire, has welcomed Lower Sixth (Year 12) and Year 11, aspiring medical students from seven local schools for an interactive workshop with Operating Theatre Live.

Organised by the College's Head of Higher Education and Careers, Louisa Piercy, and Senior School Assistant Head (Partnerships), Emma Bowater, 47 students from Birchwood High School, Hockerill Anglo-European College, Leventhorpe School, St Mary's

Catholic School, The Bishop's Stortford High School, The Hertfordshire & Essex High School and Science College, and Passmore's Academy joined 13 of the College's own Lower Sixth aspiring medics for the opportunity to further their knowledge of the human body and gain first-hand experience of a career in medicine.

Throughout the day, students worked with the clinical team from Operating Theatre Live, learned how to scrub up, charted

the treatment of a patient from incident to trauma surgery, and carried out several organ dissections and surgical procedures. Alongside brain, eye, gastric tract, pulmonary-thoracic, and cardio-thoracic dissections, students also learned about anaesthetics, infection control, medical ethics, and clinical work experience.

The College hopes to continue to provide opportunities of a similar nature to local students in the future.



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FOODS

10 things you should know about school minibus operations

1. What permit or licence to operate under

Schools have two options:

- i. A PSV Operator's Licence that allows you to make a profit from your transport operations. It requires a dedicated transport manager and drivers to have D1 entitlement and CPC training.
- ii. A Section 19 Permit that allows you to charge for minibus operations to cover the costs of providing this transport including paying drivers, but not seek to profit. Paid drivers require D1 entitlement, but 'volunteer' drivers can drive minibuses on standard car licence (conditions apply).

2. Section 19 Permits are organisation specific and not vehicle specific

If you have a minibus that you are lending out to other organisations, or you are borrowing a minibus, each organisation needs their own Section 19 Permit that should be displayed in the front windscreen, much like the old paper tax disk. You can not 'borrow' a Section 19 Permit. It is advisable to have an extra permit on hand for the odd occasion you're renting an additional minibus.

3. A 9-seat vehicle is not considered a minibus

Cars with up to 8 passenger seats (plus the driver) are not considered minibuses, they are categorised as cars, do not need a Section 19 Permit and therefore there is no restrictions on the drivers, whether the driver is being paid or not.

4. The three essential maintenance requirements

There are three essential maintenance checks that need to be completed to ensure your school has roadworthy vehicles; Regular services and MOTs, safety inspections and walk around checks. The combination of these

three maintenance checks will ensure you and your drivers are doing all they can to check your minibus is safe and fit to drive every day.

5. The requirement for Minibus Safety Inspections

Both the Operator's Licence and the Section 19 Permit require minibus safety inspections as part of the criteria for 'maintaining roadworthy vehicles'. Minibuses 12 years old and over require these inspections, completed by qualified engineers, every 6 weeks whereas minibuses under 12 years need them every 10 weeks. Rivervale have a fleet of engineers that cover the UK and will complete these inspections on your school premises.

6. Daily walk around checks protect drivers

Getting drivers to complete a walk around check of a minibus before they take it on the road can be difficult. It might seem to them like an unnecessary check and a waste of time. But, in fact a walk around check will protect the driver not only from blame for a scrape or bump that wasn't their fault – but from being fined and receiving penalty points when out on the road. Drivers are responsible for the state of the vehicle they are driving, not the organisation, so a bald tyre on a minibus could cost the driver £2500 and 3 penalty points.

7. Weights of minibus are important

The Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) which is also called the plated weight, as it is shown on the VIN plate, determines who can drive it. If a vehicle is plated 3.5 tonnes (35000kg) or less it can be driven on a standard car licence under a Section 19 Permit, provided the driver is not receiving payment, is over 21, and has been driving for more than 2 years.

There is an additional allowance of 750kg for specialist equipment. If a minibus which is plated 3.5 tonnes then has additional equipment fitted a new 'plate' will be put on the vehicle of 4.250 tonnes and can still be driven on a standard car licence. You cannot use that additional weight allowance for anything else.

8. How long does it take to charge an electric minibus and how long will that charge last?

Charging your minibus depends on two things, the size of the battery in your vehicle and the speed of the charger. If you know these two numbers, you can determine rough charge times. You divide the size of the battery by the speed of the charger. The Ford E-Transit Minibus with a 68kW battery would take a little over half an hour to charge to 80% from a 115kW charge point ($68/115 = 0.59$) or 9 hours from a 7.5kW charge point ($68/7.5 = 9.06$).

Range anxiety for electric minibuses is a common concern. Each vehicle will give you a range that it expects the vehicle can reach and many have driving modes that will increase efficiency. If you remember that your range is affected by the type of driving and the roads you're using (urban, motorways or rural), the weight of the vehicle, if you have a full payload, and also the amount of electric you are using inside the vehicle (air conditioning or heating) you should be able to anticipate the likely range for that journey. Just like diesel gauges your minibus will let you know when you need to recharge and most even have the technology to tell you where the nearest charging station is.

9. Driver fatigue is a real issue

Life is incredibly busy for many school staff and teachers who are maybe getting in early to prepare, teaching all day and then jumping

in a minibus to drive to and coach at a sporting fixture before driving back to school. Driver fatigue is a real danger, and it is important that schools insist that teachers are giving themselves enough time to take breaks, or have an additional driver to share the load.

10. It is easy to forget the size of the vehicle you're driving

Modern minibuses are so comfortable and intuitive to drive it's easy to forget how high and wide your vehicle is, especially if you're driving a route you often do in a car. The most common dents and scrapes we see for minibuses are missing wing mirrors, dented roofs, and damaged tyres and wheel surrounds – all because drivers don't know, or forget, the width and height of the vehicle they are driving.

Rivervale Minibus is committed to ensuring that its customers not only have the knowledge to run safe, compliant and efficient minibus fleets but that they have tools to help them do this easily.

We offer the UK's only online minibus management course to help schools understand all that is required under a Section 19 Permit, we offer driver training for MiDAS and D1 – as well as online driver training and risk assessments that will ensure you can monitor and improve the skills of your drivers affordably and annually. We have a free app for walk around checks to protect drivers, for anyone to use, not just Rivervale customers and we will complete your safety inspections onsite, so you don't have to worry about drop off and pick up.

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AI in education - preparing for a paradigm shift

'The biggest threat of AI to education is inaction.' Director of Innovation across the four RGS Worcester Schools (RGSW), John Jones, shares some of the strategies and approaches that they have adopted to help successfully integrate AI into teaching and learning.



John Jones

As the Director of Innovation across the four RGS Worcester Schools (RGSW), one of my remits is to 'stay abreast of technological advancements'. A task that had always been a challenge, suddenly became an entirely different prospect following the release of ChatGPT in December 2022. Overnight, pupils had access to an Artificial Intelligence (AI) that could do their homework, whilst teachers could use it to plan lessons, mark examinations and provide feedback to student assignments. Since then, barely a day goes by without a new AI tool being released or a headline about bias, job security, and the degradation of critical skills such as writing and problem solving.

At RGS Worcester, we believe the biggest threat of AI to education is inaction. Our proactive strategy has been built on continuous professional development (CPD) and fostering AI literacy across all levels—students, staff, and stakeholders. This approach is supported by a robust AI Policy and Acceptable Use Policy, which will ensure that AI tools are used ethically, transparently, and effectively in our classrooms. We are committed not just to using AI, but understanding it before integrating it into teaching and learning.

One of the key strategies has been regular, bespoke training sessions for our staff, replacing the fear of new technology with knowledge and empowerment. This approach has allowed our teachers to integrate useful AI tools effectively into their daily teaching practices whilst keeping updated with rapid technological advancements. As a consequence, AI is now utilised in places across the curriculum

where it is adding value. For example, the English department has used AI image generation tools like Canva to storyboard key parts of the text and to promote critical thinking and writing skills. OlexAI and sAlnaptic have been adopted to assist with assessment in Science and English respectively. Music has used Suno and Canva to help with music and lyric production, whilst some pupils have accessed Mindjoy's personal AI Assistants to assist with revision. Additionally, we have used AI quizzing apps such as Quizizz and Socrative for some time now across the curriculum for increased interactivity and workload reduction.

Successfully integrating AI into education requires significant pedagogical changes, brave leadership, CPD, time, and strategic resource allocation. Furthermore, whilst AI can undoubtedly support and help to develop learning, the empathy, inspiration, and mentorship that teachers provide for pupils is still (and will always be, I hope) irreplaceable. Thoughtful integration of AI with human-led instruction will be crucial to creating a truly inclusive, effective, and engaging educational experience for pupils. To leverage AI effectively though, educators need time and training to adapt their teaching methods.

Our curriculum innovation also includes discussions on AI literacy, the ethical use of AI, emphasising original work, and the responsible use of technology, all of which are underpinned by our AI policy. These conversations start early at RGSW and are aimed at empowering pupils to navigate the digital world ethically and

effectively. For example, an introduction to AI begins in Year Four, where pupils explore the functionalities of AI like Alexa and Siri. This early exposure is crucial as it sets the foundation for more advanced concepts like machine learning, which pupils tackle by building AI chatbots in Year Six using resources like Scratch and Google's Teachable Machine. These hands-on experiences are vital for fostering both an intuitive understanding and a healthy scepticism towards AI technologies, as pupils begin to understand AI's capabilities and limitations.

At Senior School, in Computer Science and PSHCE lessons we continue these discussions, focusing on AI Literacy and understanding biases inherent in AI algorithms. We engage students in activities that require them to evaluate AI outputs critically, fostering a discerning approach to the use of technology. Furthermore, we support this learning through school-wide assemblies and clear communication with parents, ensuring that our entire community is informed and engaged.

Amidst these advancements, I do have growing concerns about the digital divide and the ever-widening gap between those with access to cutting-edge technology and those that don't. Ensuring equitable access to these tools also needs to be a priority alongside providing schools, teachers, and pupils the opportunity to learn how to get the best out of this extraordinary, complex, and potentially bewildering technology. In an attempt to counterbalance this,

we have delivered AI CPD sessions and AI assemblies at other schools in our community (and further afield) as I strongly believe that every institution needs to be starting the conversation about AI in education. What is happening now is as transformative as the arrival of the internet itself and the education sector needs to get ready. By spreading our insights and methods, we hope to support and motivate other educational institutions (both state and independent) to integrate AI effectively and responsibly in their own contexts. By working together, we can all learn the benefits, understand the risks and limitations, and assess the future direction of AI in education,

In conclusion, integrating AI into education at RGS Worcester is about more than just adopting new technologies; it's about preparing our students for a future where AI is ubiquitous. Our comprehensive approach—embracing change, fostering ethical considerations, and continually adapting to new educational needs—ensures that we are equipping our students with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in an increasingly AI-integrated world. We stand on the brink of a significant educational transformation, and the key to success is proactive engagement with these new technologies and embracing the change already here, whilst remaining fully aware of the flaws and challenges innate within Artificial Intelligence.

Maximising Pupil Potential Conference

Downe House, Berkshire, welcomed almost 200 school leaders and teachers from across the country to its annual Academic Conference on Maximising Pupil Potential. Tackling a variety of issues from the impending threat of VAT on private school fees, to the risks around AI plagiarism, and whether GCSE exams are fit for purpose today, the conference was designed to stimulate debate and discussion. The audience, made up of both state and independent schools, heard keynote speeches from former longest serving Chief Inspector of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, as well as Principal of Gordonstoun, Moray, Lisa Kerr and Jane Boardman OBE, former CEO at M&C Saatchi Talk.

Amanda shared her thoughts and insights with the delegates, citing Little House on the Prairie and its 'make-do and mend' approach to highlight what she believes children are missing out on today. She said, "One of the charms of Laura Ingalls Wilder's childhood world (as depicted in Little House on the Prairie) is that a child could comprehend so much of what was around them and at an early age, that they could start

to learn many of the skills they needed for that life."

Touching on topical debates such as the use of AI in education and the changing world, Amanda added, "AI has the potential to remove children's natural thirst for knowledge," she also highlighted that humanity needs the all-important skills of knowledge and analysis, and that with AI and the Internet, the challenge has long existed around preventing children from taking shortcuts. Although Amanda agreed that more education around the use of AI in school is needed, she also suggested that schools will need to revert to more supervision to avoid young people taking shortcuts and to protect them from the exponential changes happening around us as a society.

Lisa Kerr, also addressed the delegates, sharing her own personal journey of entering the world of education. She spoke fondly of her younger student days as a jazz singer and how she landed her first job in radio before launching a business and later securing her first role at a school. She highlighted the importance of transferable skills

in education and how her school has staff with skills across a variety of sectors. Lisa told delegates that every child at Gordonstoun is valued because of their differences and that schools need to look beyond the traditional sphere of teaching when recruiting if they are to provide the right support in the future.

Jane Boardman talked candidly about young people, careers and job interviews from a corporate perspective. She spoke about the selection process for candidates and noticing an obvious shift towards acceptance of difference and generosity of spirit. She said that nurturing character development in children is vital as attitudes and approaches to working life are different today and that kindness and curiosity are important traits to have.

Following the keynote speeches, Lisa and Jane took questions from the audience. Among the topics raised by Heads attending the conference, was the impending threat of VAT being imposed on independent schools under new Labour plans. Lisa suggested that the plans were "short sighted" and required a much deeper



investigation into the impact and consequences of such a significant change on society. Lisa also spoke about how independent schools positively contribute to society as a whole as well as to their local communities and to the millions of children who don't attend private school.

The day also included breakout sessions with speakers including Head of Bedales School, Hampshire, Will Goldsmith who debated whether our public exams for 16-year-olds are fit for purpose. Digital Education Specialist, Daisy Christodoulou discussed the future of education amidst the AI hype, while best-selling author Chloe Combi, tackled the topic of understanding the mindset of Gen Z and Gen A.

Advertorial Feature

Cultivating healthy habits: Engaging children in food and nutrition

Sophia Cornelius, *apetito* Dietitian explores how schools can encourage healthy choices.

"Our diet provides us with all the nutrients essential for our body to function, so ensuring that children eat a balanced and varied diet is fundamental for physical and mental development. An imbalance or excess of nutrients can have negative consequences for health and well-being, affecting sleep, confidence, performance at school and increasing the risk of disease, such as type 2 diabetes.

"It's commonly known that foods high in salt, sugar and saturated fats should be limited but to support Healthy Eating Week (running 10th-14th June), instead of focusing on what we shouldn't

have, it's important that schools are educating children on what to eat more of!

"Engaging children in food preparation and nutrition education helps them understand where their food comes from and the importance of making healthy choices.

"For children to make healthy choices, nutrition education needs to be fun and relevant, long-term health may not be their priority, but having the energy to play with their friends for longer may be. Using interactive learning and encouraging children to be involved in food preparation and cooking may spike an interest.

"We know that fruits and vegetables are packed full of vitamins and minerals that are necessary for children's growth and development, including immunity, healthy bones, eyes and teeth.

"An easy way to get children to make healthy choices, is to teach them about the importance of having at least 5 A DAY portions of fruit and vegetables – fresh, frozen, dried, and canned all count and fresh doesn't always mean best!

"Variety is very important, different colours provide different vitamins so try to encourage pupils to eat the rainbow and

try lots of different fruit and vegetable options at lunchtime. Creative presentation is a great way to make foods more appealing, try colourful fruit salads or vegetable skewers to increase variety in a child's diet.

"Early childhood is a critical period for developing lifelong habits. When children are taught the importance of nutrition and are involved in making food choices, they are more likely to carry these habits into adulthood. Healthy eating can be enjoyable and flavorful; demonstrating this to children is crucial for encouraging them to make healthy choices in the future."

Find out more about *apetito*'s school meals service: <https://apetito.link/ISM2024>

Census - the independent sector in numbers

The annual census of schools in membership of the constituent associations of the Independent Schools Council has been published. The figures below and in the infographic provide a snapshot of key results from the survey which was carried out January 2024 and completed by all UK member schools.

Changing membership

- Since last year's Census, when 1,395 schools were in membership of the constituent associations: 30 schools left, 52 schools joined, 14 schools consolidated records with other ISC member schools to form 7 schools, and 1 school split to form 2 schools for census reporting. There are therefore 1,411 schools in membership this year, 1,356 of which participated in both the 2023 and 2024 Census.

Pupil numbers

- There are now 556,551 pupils at 1,411 ISC member schools. There has been an increase in the number of schools from last year when there were 554,243 pupils at 1,395 schools. At the 1,356 schools completing the Census in both 2023 and 2024, pupil numbers have decreased slightly by 0.1%.

School size

- Most ISC schools are small – half of schools have fewer than 285 pupils and one quarter of schools have fewer than 153 pupils. Only 97 ISC schools (7%) have 1,000 pupils or more.

Fees

- The average day school fee has increased 8.0%, with the majority of day schools charging between £3,000 and £6,000 per term.
- Over a third of all ISC pupils receive some type of fee assistance. The average means-tested bursary was worth £12,909 per annum, an increase of 9.3% compared with last year.
- 9,328 pupils paid no fees at all, either via a full bursary or a combination of a bursary and scholarship(s).

Barnaby Lenon, Chairman Independent Schools Council said:

"2024 brings a watershed moment for independent education. As we look back on 50 years of ISC, we recognise various times when schools needed to be fleet of foot to adapt to growing political and economic headwinds. This is another such time..."

Two significant economic factors have impacted the sector. Firstly, the UK has been passing through a period of historically high inflation. Secondly, schools were expecting employer contributions in the Teachers' Pension Scheme to increase significantly; though they did not then know by how much, they later discovered costs would increase by a fifth for participating schools.

In the political forum, schools' main concern will be what Labour's VAT policy might mean for pupil recruitment and retention.

However, amid the gloom, there are also statistics to celebrate. Despite the tough circumstances, fee assistance is now at a record high for the sector, and once again the rise in the amount of fee assistance available across the sector has outpaced average fee rises. And the number of partnerships between state and independent schools has once again increased."

Teaching staff

- A total of 60,193 full-time equivalent teachers are employed at ISC schools.
- The pupil-teacher ratio at ISC schools is 8.8:1. This compares with an average of 18.0:1 across all state-funded schools in 2023.

- This year, 429 teachers from outside the UK came to teach in ISC schools.

Partnerships

- ISC schools reported 9,248 partnerships in the calendar year 2023, an increase from 8,793 last year.

ISC ANNUAL CENSUS 2024

The ISC annual Census was carried out in January 2024. All 1,411 schools in UK membership of the constituent associations completed the survey. The Census covers 556,551 pupils and provides a detailed snapshot of the schools and of the wider social and economic trends in the UK.



Schools
1,411

The total number of schools in ISC membership. This is an increase of 16 from last year's total of 1,395.

Pupils
556,551

The number of pupils across all schools in ISC.



New pupils
107,259

This represents a decrease of 2.7% from the 2023 Census – the biggest fall since this data began to be collected in 2011. VAT being added to school fees is one factor influencing this.

Academic selection
798

Over half of all ISC schools are not academically selective. A further 253 schools have academic selection only for some age ranges.

Median school size
284

Half of schools have under 285 pupils and one quarter of schools have under 153 pupils.



Means-tested assistance
£500m+

The amount provided in means-tested fee assistance for pupils at ISC schools. Nearly half of all pupils on means-tested bursaries have more than half of their fees remitted. Overall, the amount of fee assistance available for independent school pupils was over £1.4 billion.



Higher education
90%

The proportion of pupils who leave ISC schools to go on to higher education. Of these, 4% go to Oxbridge and 51% to one of the top 25 universities in the Sunday Times' Good University Guide.

Overseas pupils
26,195

There are 26,195 pupils in ISC schools whose parents live overseas. This represents 4.7% of all pupils and brings cultural diversity to our schools.



Charitable work
£9.9m+

At least £9.9 million was raised for charities at ISC schools and 935 schools organised volunteering opportunities for staff and/or pupils.



Partnerships
9,248

Schools reported 9,248 partnerships in the calendar year 2023. This was a 5% rise on the year before.



SEND
111,154

The number of pupils at ISC schools who have been identified as having SEND. Over 103,000 receive support without being in receipt of an education, health and care plan.



1974 **50th anniversary** 2024

Visit www.isc.co.uk for more details

Integrating organ studies

Instead of sitting at the periphery of the music department, learning the organ at Battle Abbey School, East Sussex, has been fully integrated. Director of Music, St Peter's, Hammersmith and Head of Organ Studies at the school, Travis Baker M.Mus L.Mus.A, discusses the creation of an Organ School and changing perceptions.



Travis Baker

At any gathering, the question I dread most is "... and what do you do?" I could now write the script:

"I'm an organist", I say.

"And what exactly does an organist do for a living?", responds the other person, usually accompanied by a puzzled expression, perhaps even some awkwardness.

I launch into my concise, and well-rehearsed monologue which, instead of prompting any enthusiasm for the profession, usually steers the conversation towards an uncomfortable fork: the other person either concludes the conversation by saying something along the lines of "well, that's a niche hobby for someone to pursue" - which stings a little, hearing a few succinct words reduce thirty years of hard graft to a mere 'hobby', - or the conversation continues, but soon fizzles, because a distant relation, whose name they can't currently recall, used to play the organ. Whichever route the conversation takes, it can leave one feeling as though our profession is antiquated, and the career path we fervently tread, obsolete.

An organist's career may not be as clearly defined, or as easily

understood as that of a barrister, dentist, or social media influencer, but more and more, I persist in making people understand because, if we don't take ourselves, and our profession seriously, how can we possibly expect other people to take it seriously. This was the driving thought behind the Organ School at Battle Abbey - to create an environment where the organ is part of the fabric; where learning the organ is not perceived as unusual, but actively encouraged and supported.

So often the organ sits on the periphery of the music department, with only a handful of students drawn towards it. My objective was to surround the students with the organ - to elicit curiosity, and to make the unfamiliar, familiar. The organ had not previously been taught at Battle Abbey, so some ground work was needed before lessons were offered.

The Director of Music, Lucinda Sheppard, and I devised a plan to promote, and gradually integrate it fully into the music department. Lucinda began incorporating the organ in school services, music concerts, and choir performances, often carefully selecting choral repertoire with significant organ

accompaniments, and always encouraging an exciting organ voluntary. These initial steps were invaluable - increasingly, students were surrounded by the organ, and they became curious about the console, how the organ works, the colours, the feet ... It helped, too, that I became more present; as the future organ teacher at Battle Abbey, it was vital the students knew who I was.

The other important member of the team was The Very Reverend Lee Duckett, Dean of Battle. Dean Duckett offered the neighbouring church of St Mary's for both teaching, and student practice. In the space of six months we had successfully paved the way for the Organ School: Lucinda had encouraged three students to learn the organ, and Dean Duckett co-ordinated schedules in the church to accommodate both my teaching, and student rehearsals. This was only the beginning - we were all keen to see the Organ School develop.

Dean Duckett approached the Diocese of Chichester and, in partnership with St Mary's, Battle, instigated a scholarship programme to support an organ student. In addition to covering the cost of organ lessons for an academic year, the student is invited to attend Chichester Cathedral to spend a 'day in the life of' a Cathedral organist. In return, the student plays at three choral evensong services, per academic year, at St Mary's, Battle.

The number of organ students continued to grow and, where possible, Lucinda involved them in the music making at Battle Abbey: accompanying anthems, playing before or after an assembly, and even including them in bigger school services. It became clear to me that one rehearsal instrument wasn't enough; another organ

was needed for student practice. Moreover, an organ housed in the Performing Arts Centre, the 'nerve centre' of music at Battle Abbey, would really help to immerse the organ within the music department. I had a number of ideas, most of them requiring a sum of money I knew wouldn't be acceptable, so when the 'donation' of an Allen organ appeared, I unashamedly nudged Lucinda into accepting it. It isn't an organ with a sensitive tracker action, and it doesn't make the most appealing sound, but for students starting out, who need to learn notes and co-ordinate hands and feet, it's adequate. The organ is happily accommodated in one of the rehearsal studios in the Performing Arts Centre, and the organists can often be heard practising.

Now in its third year, the Organ School has seven students, and one of these is from a neighbouring school. As a team, we continue to make small improvements - Lucinda recently scheduled all the ABRSM exams to be held in St Mary's, Battle, which meant the organists, along with all the other instrumentalists, were included as part of the overall exam experience. It was a simple change but it reinforced the idea that the organ is part of the instrumental programme.

There's work to be done, but we are slowly altering the perspective about the organ, and the organists, at Battle Abbey School. When the organ strikes up, there are smiles, eyes widen, and students are curious as to whom is playing. Gone are the awkward side-ways glances, and the attitude that learning the organ might simply be an unusual hobby.



Pictured: Travis Baker and student at the organ



Credit: Orest Photography

British Youth Music Theatre places

Two teenagers from Dame Allan's Schools, in Newcastle, have been awarded places with the British Youth Music Theatre (BYMT).

Ella McFetrich and Freya Topping were selected to join national performing arts education charity BYMT after an audition process.

Pictured (l-r): Freya Topping and Ella McFetrich

Ella, 16, has secured a role in BYMT's summer production of 'Wonderland in Alice' – a movement-led reimagining of Lewis Carroll's classic tale, exploring Alice as a non-binary character.

Freya, 15, was chosen to take part in BYMT's recent production of Animal Farm, in Birmingham.



'Movin On Up'

Dancers from New Hall School, Essex, Festival Dance Team have competed at the Supreme Dance Competition held in Hampshire.

The youngest of New Hall's dancers, the Year 1 & 2 Festival Team, performed three routines in the '8 Years and Under' category, all routines placed in the top three. Older dancers in the Intermediate and Advanced Dance Companies also performed a variety of routines, which all

placed in the top three of their categories.

A further four dance numbers performed by the Year 1 & 2 Festival Dance Team, Intermediate Dance Company and Advanced Dance Company were selected to be performed, next year, at MOVE IT Dance Convention – the largest of its type in the world, bringing together over 32,000 dancers – students, teachers, and professionals.

Pictured: Year 1 & 2 Dancers at the Supreme Dance Competition



Young Organists' Competition

A musician at King's Ely, Cambridgeshire, is celebrating success in a national competition.

Thomas Strudwick, who is in Year 10 at King's Ely Senior, has been crowned the 'Intermediate Class' winner of this year's Young Organists' Competition. The contest is organised by the School Organists' Association, which was launched in 2020 to support organists and organ teachers in UK schools.

Thomas, who is a former Ely Cathedral Chorister, submitted a video of him playing Buxtehude's 'Praeludium in C' on the organ at Ely Cathedral.

Thomas, who also plays the piano and cello, only started playing the organ in October 2022.

King's Ely and Ely Cathedral offer a Sixth Form Organ Scholarship. This opportunity is designed for a young organist seeking to apply for a University Organ Scholarship or Conservatoire course. It can also act as preparation for a gap-year Cathedral post. Former Ely Organ Scholars have gone on to prestigious University placements, including the Organ Scholarships of King's, Girton, and Emmanuel Colleges in Cambridge, and most recently at Jesus College, Cambridge, where Miriam Reveley FRCO is the first female Organ Scholar in the College's 500-year history.

Pictured: Thomas Strudwick



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 through to 10 (aged 10 – 16 years old), finished the competition having claimed nine trophies, as well as boasting high ranking runner-up finishes.

Pictured: Students at the dance competition

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 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.

Bringing opera to the community

Benenden School, Kent, has partnered with the English National Opera (ENO) to inspire a new generation of opera lovers across Kent. But what form has this partnership taken and what's happened so far?

Benenden School is celebrating its centenary year. As a part of this the school has welcomed musicians, singers and directors from the ENO to hold a series of Opera Takeover workshops for local schools across three weeks, culminating in a closing concert.

ENO experts taught Benenden's Lower School Choir – as well as pupils from Cranbrook Church of England Primary School, Benenden Church of England Primary School, Colliers Green CofE Primary School, The John Wallis Church of England

Academy, Rolvenden Primary School, Dulwich Cranbrook and Vinehall School – to sing and perform music from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*.

The workshops saw students having fun exploring vocal techniques, expressive choreography, and some of the elaborate and eccentric costumes the ENO had brought along – helping to make opera more engaging and accessible to pupils who wouldn't ordinarily have the opportunity.

In the third week of the workshop series, all the schools – 340 pupils in total – combined and were led by the ENO in a concert that was open to more than 200 parents, performing the pieces they had learned while also enjoying



Pictured: The star of Benenden's centenary musical described performing at the London Coliseum as 'Something that I have dreamed of since I was very young'

demonstrations from the ENO's singers in Benenden's Centenary Hall concert venue.

Benenden Headmistress Samantha Price said: "We're absolutely thrilled to have had the opportunity to make opera more widely accessible and enjoyable for our community – and we couldn't have done this without the incredible effort that has been put in by the English National Opera.

"It was a joy to see students from Benenden and beyond getting wrapped up in their performances and really engaging with classical music – and equally wonderful to see the pride on their parents' faces at the final concert."

The partnership with the ENO also enabled Benenden's history-

making production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* on the biggest stage in London's West End: The London Coliseum, where the ENO is resident. In March, Benenden became the first school to perform at the venue, with an interpretation of a musical that had never before been staged there.

Expanding music and performance opportunities at Benenden was a key strategic aim in the run up to the school's centenary, and a driving motivation behind the replacement of the old school hall with the Centenary Buildings – the RIBA nominated Centenary Hall and Sir David K.P. Li Music School.



Pictured: A singer from the English National Opera workshoping an Aria from *The Marriage of Figaro* with Benenden students

Gala concert

The High School of Glasgow has hosted a Gala Concert at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall as part of its 900-year anniversary celebrations.

In a tribute to the school's 1124 Glasgow Cathedral Choir School roots, over 300 pupils from Junior 4 through to Senior 6 took to the stage with performances from each of the established choirs in the school: the Junior 4 to Junior 6 Choir, the *Transitus* to Senior 2 Choir, the Senior 3 to Senior 6 (and staff) Choir and the Chamber Choir, alongside performances

Pictured: Pupils at the High School of Glasgow Gala Concert

from the award-winning Pipe Band, Percussion Ensemble, Concert Band, Jazz Band and String Ensemble.

The Finale recital was 'Highland Cathedral', arranged and kindly lent to the School by Martin Thomson, and featured every single musician and singer from across the evening.

Rector John O'Neill, said: "To perform on stage at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall is a truly momentous occasion, one that I'm sure our pupils will



remember for years to come. It is particularly fitting that the location of this concert, in the heart of Glasgow, is just minutes

away from where our school first started as the Sang School of Glasgow Cathedral in the 12th century."

Tech investment. An education.

What schools need to look for when investing in this new age of technology

Need to know

Education has undergone a profound metamorphosis, with digital and blended learning taking centre stage. However, these novel learning approaches pose unique challenges for schools, challenges that we understand and are here to help you navigate.

Students now need to collaborate securely with their classmates and teachers. They also need access to inspiring and forward-thinking technologies to prepare them for top-tier universities and high-profile careers.

Educators must personalise learning for students of all abilities and enable engagement from any location. School administrators must ensure that all students have access to digital learning to equip them for networking and influence. The importance of connections made through the school's alumni network cannot be overstated.

School IT teams, meanwhile, need to manage and deploy devices remotely, minimising technical issues and ensuring the security of school, student and teacher data. All this must be done while balancing ever-tightening IT budgets.

Invest in quality

As we navigate this new territory, AI provides innovative ways of supporting digital learning that are hugely beneficial for teachers and students. This may soon become integral to how we teach, so schools need to be forward thinking to prepare for this eventuality.

Generative AI models, for example, can create virtual simulations of a classroom or laboratory so that students can collaborate and participate in practical learning from any location – a concept that supports online education at scale.

Also, generative AI can help teachers assess students' abilities and tailor their learning for a more personalised experience. It can even automate grading, saving teachers a significant amount of time.

With this in mind, Dell Technologies and Microsoft have reimagined Windows for a new era of the digital classroom while unlocking AI's potential. Their goal is to help every student reach their potential by supporting learning, collaboration and creativity in a secure and trusted environment.

The value of investment in private education and the returns in terms



of opportunities and outcomes is inestimable.

Next generation

Windows 11 is the most inclusively designed Windows ever, with greater accessibility and more built-in learning tools and user controls than ever before. When paired with the best-in-class, purpose-built Dell Latitude 3000 Series, students can access learning materials independently, regardless of their ability, income, language, location or identity.

TECH TALK

Dell's Education Portfolio combines Windows 11 with the latest Microsoft AI solutions.

Affordable devices for today's education

Dell's Education Portfolio enables administrators to stretch their budgets with low-cost devices

designed for education and running on intuitive, secure software.

Simple to deploy and manage

It's easy to deploy and manage devices from anywhere – everything from laptops to immersive Dell Interactive Touch Projectors.

Balancing productivity with security

Students can work more productively with one-click access to mic controls and Teams. Protected by the most secure Windows yet on devices powered by Intel processors.

Improving performance and the user's experience

Learners gain forward-thinking technologies. Educators can personalise learning for all students. IT staff can balance security and cost-effectiveness.



Scan the QR code to see how Dell can help you adopt the latest technology securely and affordably

Invest in the future

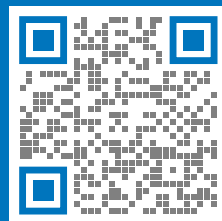


Schools need to do their homework when investing in this brave new world of technology.

With education experiencing a profound metamorphosis, schools are facing unique challenges. The good news is that Dell Technologies next-generation Education Portfolio combines Windows 11 with the latest Microsoft AI solutions to offer you:

- Tomorrow's devices for today's tutoring
- Effortlessly-integrated and manageable technology
- The perfect balance of productivity with security
- Improved performance and user experience

Dell. An educated investment.



Scan the QR code to see how Dell can help you adopt the latest technology securely and affordably.

DELLTechnologies

Windows 11

School partnerships are “moral imperative”

Speaking to over 300 delegates working in independent sector admissions, marketing and communications roles, RGS Newcastle Headmaster, Geoffrey Stanford delivered a keynote address outlining his school's educational philosophy and its impact on the Northeast regional community during the recent AMCIS Annual Conference.

Emphasising the school's commitment to its charitable objectives, he said: “We view our bursaries and state school partnerships not just part of our charitable objectives but as a moral imperative.”

The presentation also shed light on the educational challenges faced by the region, including high levels of deprivation and systemic issues affecting educational attainment, and how the school plays a part in overcoming their impact.

The positive impact of RGS Newcastle's efforts is evident in the overwhelming support from parents and the broader community, with 98% expressing support for the school's bursary program and partnership initiatives.

“Our focus is not just on numbers but on creating meaningful collaborations that drive positive change.”

He said: “Through our partnership projects, we aim to uplift schools and educators, particularly in areas facing recruitment challenges or resource constraints.”

The presentation also highlighted the importance of impact measurement and a transparent approach to partnership work. A social impact review published by the school provided insights into the breadth and depth of its

projects across various schools and communities.

Looking to the future, Mr Stanford expressed optimism about the potential for systemic impact and the role of independent schools in becoming “part of the solution rather than being seen as the problem”. He emphasised the importance of staying agile in the face of challenges such as changing technology, demographic shifts, and the uncertainty surrounding Labour's VAT on fees policy.

He concluded with a call to action for independent schools to collaborate with educators, policymakers, and industry leaders to create sustainable solutions that address the evolving needs of children and their communities, and particularly those where deprivation has a negative impact on learning and achievement.

Runners support cancer research



Over 70 staff members, parents, and friends of Bromsgrove School, Worcestershire, have participated in the Great Birmingham Run, raising a total of £15,300 to support cancer research and initiatives.

The Great Birmingham Run, a major event that runs annually, provided a platform for the School community to unite for a cause that touches many lives. The funds raised will directly contribute to Cancer Research UK's ongoing work in understanding cancer, developing new treatments, and improving the lives of those affected.

Pictured: Runners at the Great Birmingham Run

Sarah Louise Dix Student Enrichment Opportunity

Traditional Upholstery Workshop Package

One-off outlay for easy to follow video, images, written instructions & tools.

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The activity involves upholstering a drop in footstool pad using traditional skills, tools and materials.



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Advertorial Feature

Upholstery workshop for schools



Everyone's saying it... but getting young people off their screens and using their hands and creative brain is truly beneficial. Teenagers need complementary activities that will ultimately benefit their academic success.

Our footstool workshop gets them using hand tools, natural materials and fun fabrics to create a tangible, and a proper piece of furniture to keep.

Upholstery is becoming more and more popular with adults as a meaningful activity, so enabling other age groups to have the opportunity too can only be a good thing.

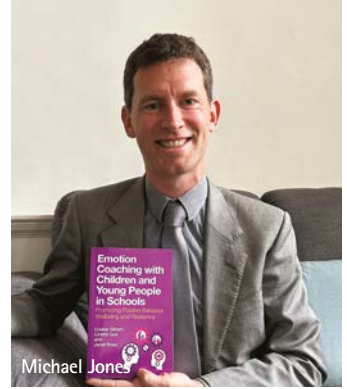
The package has real longevity for schools. Once the package which includes a video, images, written instructions, tools, beech wood frames and materials, has been purchased there is minimum future outlay.

Shipping available nationwide.

www.sarahlouisedix.co.uk

Emotion coaching

Emotion coaching uses moments of heightened emotion and resulting behaviour to guide and teach a child or young person about more effective responses but how can this be implemented in to a school setting? Senior Deputy Head (Pastoral) at Solihull Prep School, West Midlands, Michael Jones, shares some top tips.



Emotion coaching appeared on my radar some twelve months ago and, motivated by the impressive neuroscience and research underpinning the concept, I enrolled on a two-day course to find out more and consider how it could be implemented in a school setting. "Helping children and young people to understand the different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them." (John Gottman 1996) - Emotion Coaching is an approach rather than a specific intervention and therefore is best implemented across a setting and success hinges on 'buy in' from all stakeholders.

The process of emotion coaching can be broken down into four steps:

1. Notice and empathise – notice any reactions or judgements the child's behaviour causes in you and imagine a similar situation for an adult.
2. Label and validate – help the child to name what they're experiencing. "I can see that you're angry. I'd feel angry if this happened to me..."
3. Set expectations – emotions are fine but some behaviours aren't. "I understand you're feeling sad, but hitting your friend isn't ok."
4. Problem Solve – once the child is calm, explore and agree solutions with them.

Emotion coaching was originally observed by Gottman as an effective style of parent communication

For more information on Emotion Coaching visit: www.emotioncoachinguk.com

as opposed to other approaches: 'Laissez Faire' (accepting emotions but not problem solving or setting expectations), 'Dismissive' (distract and see emotions as unimportant) and 'Disapproving' (seeing emotions as something to be squashed through punishment). The founders of Emotion Coaching UK saw the potential for it to be implemented in community settings such as schools.

It can be particularly effective for more extreme 'meltdowns' which often can lead to physical aggression or verbal outbursts, which are potentially disruptive or upsetting to others in the classroom or wider school environment. Thankfully these are few and far between in our Solihull Prep School setting and staff were often able to focus on lower level 'wobbles' such as being left out at play time or struggling with a lesson concept. In such cases timely intervention by an adult can steer the child back on track and help avoid a 'meltdown' altogether.

I was confident that we were well placed in our school to build on the strong foundations of a naturally caring staff to make further gains by adopting this approach more holistically. We set about training teaching assistants, followed by teaching staff and then lunchtime supervisors, wraparound care and admin colleagues. Taking the time to speak to different groups not only made me more confident with the training material but allowed for a bespoke approach and more

traction within each group. Catch up sessions were offered to ensure no one was missed.

Following up periodically by asking staff to complete reflection logs, encouraging dialogue between each other about their experiences and empowering other pastoral leaders to champion Emotion Coaching themselves were all key to ensuring it began to gain traction and became embedded in our Solihull Prep School's culture. As anticipated during my own training, some staff were natural emotion coaches, already instinctively adopting this approach when encountering a dysregulated child. For others this was a fresh approach and I was grateful to them for persevering and challenging their own habits, as well as other leaders for modelling and sharing the benefits they saw when children responded positively.

It became clear that some of the biggest gains could be made with our parents supporting this approach and so we held a pastoral seminar, attended by over 150 parents. This introduced them to the concept, as well as highlighting how it reinforces our existing Wellbeing and Personal Development curriculum topics of building resilience and developing mindfulness skills in our young people. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and it has been pleasing to be stopped by parents during the morning drop off to hear anecdotes when emotion coaching was successfully used

Top Tips for embedding Emotion Coaching in your school

- Practise it lots yourself – a bonus if you have children! It'll help you have credibility when training and give you lots of examples to draw on
- Deliver the training to different groups of staff, allowing time for discussion and follow up
- Engage parents through workshops – they can help to reinforce this approach at home.
- Have practical ways to embed the steps in everyone's practice – summary leaflets were given to all parents/staff and we created a credit card style reminder of the four steps that slots into the back of staff lanyards
- Ensure SLT support and that other pastoral leaders help to champion this approach so that it can be sustained over time

with their child. Indeed, many staff found this helped with their own children – another helpful factor in encouraging them to adopt it into their practice.

A year on from the training I would encourage any school adopting this to keep bringing it back onto colleagues' radars as they have so many plates to 'spin'. Our next step is to further develop our tools for the problem-solving stage; the Zones of Regulation is a tool gaining increased popularity, which has the potential to help bring greater awareness to young people managing their emotions.

SmartSTEMs

Morrison's Academy, Perthshire, has welcomed around 300 young people and their families for its second interactive STEM day.

Run in partnership with the charity SmartSTEMs, the free event for 10-14 year olds included a series of interactive workshops, a STEM careers showcase, speakers and a pot of STEM prizes.

The workshops were hosted by figures from the world of STEM and Morrison's Academy teachers.

A range of employers from local businesses and national organisations also came together to help showcase opportunities in STEM.

This year's speakers were Colin McGregor, former Morrison's Academy pupil and RAF fighter pilot, and Natasha Pell, a Manufacturing Engineer who is passionate about innovation, development and inspiring the next generation of engineers.



CHANGING FACES... CHANGING PLACES...



Austin Friars, Cumbria, has announced the appointment of Mr Chris Hattam

as their new Headmaster from September.

He succeeds Mr Matthew Harris, who will end his tenure after 12 years in post.

Mr Hattam joins Austin Friars from Westbourne School in Sheffield where he is currently Headmaster. He was previously Headmaster of the Elms School in Malvern and

taught for 12 years at Sedbergh School.

Mr Harris, the longest-serving lay Headmaster in the School's history, is stepping back from teaching, having guided the School through the pandemic and overseen changes such as the renaming and rebranding of the School (formerly Austin Friars St Monica's) in 2015, and the introduction of an International Programme welcoming a small number of overseas pupils into the School for the first time since boarding finished in 1997.



It has been announced that Huw Thomas will be joining the Dauntsey's,

Wiltshire, in September to take up the role of Deputy Head (Pastoral). Huw joins Dauntsey's from St Edward's, Oxford, where he is currently Housemaster of Apsley House.

Huw joined St Edward's in 2015 to take up his first teaching post after

completing his PGCE and Master's in Education at Wolfson College, Cambridge. During his time at St Edward's he has held the positions of Resident Tutor, Assistant Housemaster, Head of Higher Education and Head of History. In the co-curriculum, he has coached the 1st XV and the 1st VII in Rugby, as well as Netball, junior Rugby and Hockey. Huw became Housemaster of Apsley House in September 2022.



Queen Margaret's School for Girls, York, has announced the appointment of Ms Nicola Dudley as

its new Head.

Nicola, who has over 24 years' experience in independent education, is currently the Principal of Surval Montreux School for Girls in Switzerland.

Nicola was educated at Wycombe Abbey, Buckinghamshire, before

gaining a first class honours degree from Jesus College, Oxford. A linguist by training, Nicola has taught at several independent schools before taking on a series of leadership roles at Lomond School (Deputy Head Teacher), Scottish Council of Independent Schools (Deputy Director), Malvern College International (Director of Education) and Malvern College Hong Kong (founding Deputy Head).

Nicola is set to join QM this autumn.



The Governors from Dulwich College, London, have appointed Robert Milne, Headmaster

of Emanuel School, London, as Dr Joe Spence's successor. He will take up his position as Master of Dulwich College in September 2025.

Prior to his headship at Emanuel School, Mr Milne was Deputy Head at King's College School, Wimbledon, Head of English at

Magdalen College School, Oxford, and Head of House at King Edward's School, Birmingham.

A pupil at Pocklington School in Yorkshire, Mr Milne is an English graduate, with degrees from Leicester University and King's College, London. After his PGCE, he joined Oundle School as an English teacher and Housemaster.

From September 2024, he will be the chair of HMC's Pastoral Committee.



Kingswood School in Bath has announced the appointment of Mr Mat Chataway as

the newly appointed Principal of the Kingswood Foundation.

Following a 16-year career

spanning three schools in London, Mr Chataway will be swapping West London for the West Country as he leaves his position as Deputy Head Pastoral at Latymer Upper School to start a new life in Bath from September, alongside his wife and two children, who will be joining Kingswood Prep School.



Bishop's Stortford College, Hertfordshire, has announced the appointment of a new Head of the Prep School.

Rachael Cox will join the College in April 2025 from her current position as the Head of Eton End Prep School, Berkshire.

A graduate in Politics and History, Rachael completed her PGCE at the University of Reading before commencing her teaching career, initially in the state system. Over a period of 16 years, she has held a number of senior leadership positions and local authority advisory roles, before moving into the independent school sector in 2011. In 2017 she became Head of the Infant and Junior School at

LVS Ascot, before moving into her current role.

A full member of the Independent Association of Prep Schools, Rachael also sits on two Governing boards, and was elected as a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching in 2020 in recognition of her significant contribution to the teaching profession and is a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute, holding the status of Chartered Manager. She also acts as a visiting tutor for the University of Buckingham initial teacher training course.

The current Head of the Prep School, Bill Toleman, leaves the College in July 2024. Current Deputy Head Graham Millard will lead the Prep School in the interim period.

Co-heads announcement

September marks the start of a new era for Cheam School, Berkshire, when Sophie Green will join Will Phelps as Co-Head. Sophie, formerly Headmistress of Godstowe, Buckinghamshire and Tatler Prep Head of the Year, brings a wealth of school leadership experience, making their collective number of years in headship 25. Sophie will be the first female Head at Cheam in its 379-year history.

This move will see Cheam become one of the few schools with Co-Heads in the sector. Uniquely, Will and Sophie are married.

With the role of Head changing significantly over the last decade, becoming more complex and business-oriented, the Board of Governors believes that a combined strength of dual leadership brings security, resilience and endless possibilities.

Chair of Governors, Mark Harford, commented, "I can

Pictured: Sophie Green and Will Phelps



say that the Board is both resolute and excited that this is the very best next step for Cheam's leadership. We believe Co-Headship will take best advantage of our School's good fortune in having not one but two experienced leaders in Will and Sophie, with their different and complementary styles and skills; it will represent a boldly progressive approach to meeting the ever more complex challenges of school headship; and it will serve daily as a living model of equal partnership to all Cheam's pupils, girls and boys alike."



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Empowering girls' football and sport

In a 2023 report by the Youth Sport Trust figures show that only 64 % of all girls enjoy participating in physical education in comparison to 86% of all boys . But how can some of the barriers to girls' participation and enjoyment in sport be overcome? Head of Football at Leighton Park School, Callum Beasley, outlines how some of the initiatives taking place at the school are doing just that.

Leighton Park School is at the forefront of promoting gender equality and empowering young women through sports, particularly football. We have taken significant strides to ensure that girls have equal opportunities to engage in and excel at football, building a springboard for their personal and athletic growth, as well as being a voice to inspire other schools to create the same opportunities.

Over the last four years, the school has built strong foundations for girls in sport through the 'LP Girls Can' initiative, created by Zoe Macpherson, Head of Pre-Sixth encouraging girls to try new sports and ignite new passions - with role models from multiple sports coming to the school to encourage our students. Leighton Park adopted the 'This Girl Can' nationwide campaign to the school due to the significant drop out rates of girls in sport across the nation. Nationally, 64% of girls will have quit sports by the age of finishing puberty (aged 16-17), double the number of boys according to England Netball's 'NetballHer' survey. The aim was to dedicate a week to allowing our girls to participate in new sports, hear from inspiring sports leaders, create a fun atmosphere to collaborate in sport activities as a team and promote body positivity. With this inspiring backdrop, my

love and passion for football was a catalyst for introducing girls' football taster sessions. Since then, the enthusiasm and work gone into girls' football has been extraordinary and the interest has grown exponentially.

We started a girls-only Chelsea FC co-curricular activity in January 2024 to match the level of training the boys had, ensuring that girls received focused training and support. Simultaneously, football was elevated to a focus sport alongside hockey and netball, reflecting our commitment to providing high-quality sports education for all.

To address the lack of local leagues for girls, I created a U13s and U15s girls' football league, in partnership with, and sponsored by, YouHQ, providing more opportunities for competitive play. The league now includes over 200 girls, significantly enhancing the landscape of girls' football in Berkshire and giving others in the community more opportunities than ever before.

Taking our commitment further, we partnered with Her Game Too, an organisation whose values align so well with our own in tackling sexism within sport. This collaboration aims to raise awareness about gender equality in football and give our school values currency and purpose as

ambassadors for girls' football across the country. Through this partnership, we are amplifying our voice and advocating for broader societal change.

Following on from creating these leagues and vital partnerships, Leighton Park is hosting the very first girls' football summer tournament this summer. Welcoming eight schools across Berkshire, with girls from age 12 to 15, the tournament provides a platform for these young athletes to showcase and develop their skills in a new setting, play at a more competitive level, and foster a sense of community in ways that have not been possible within the local community before.

Our efforts are yielding remarkable results. The LP girls' football teams have achieved outstanding success, with the U13s and U15s teams remaining unbeaten. This success is not only a testament to their growing talent but also to the supportive environment we have cultivated.

The growing support in girls' football is also encouraging girls to pursue their newfound passion outside of schools also, with many of the Leighton Park girls' trialling for grass roots clubs. The growing interest is exciting, with an entire girls' team set to join Leighton Park's Real Madrid Football tour in



Callum Beasley

the summer of 2024, a significant increase from last year's Porto FC trip, which saw participation from only three girls.

Nationally, there is a concerning trend of girls dropping out of sports. However, our initiatives show that this doesn't have to be the case and that equal opportunities and the right culture can tackle some of the barriers traditionally holding girls back from enjoying their sport.

The benefits for girls' physical and mental well-being are profound, contributing to their overall personal growth, as well as changing the perception of girls in football amongst girls and boys across the Leighton Park community and beyond. It gives me so much pleasure to see our girls and boys playing football together in their free time.

Leighton Park's commitment to girls' football and helping change the mould nationally is about more than just the game. It's about creating a strong sense of team identity, supporting personal development, and fostering a community where every student can be themselves and thrive. As we continue to champion girls' football, we look forward to a future where equality in sports is not just an aspiration but a reality.



Pictured: Leighton Park's U15 Team



Pictured: Talking Strategy with Coach Callum Beasley

Badminton Grassroots Championships

14-year-old student and young equestrian from Shebbear College, Devon, Tichy Sanders, has recently returned to school after having the opportunity to compete at the Badminton Grassroots 2024 Championships on Sparhanger Velvet, owned by Camilla Albery.

Tichy secured her place at Badminton last year, beating 105 competitors (mostly adults!) in her BE90 class and even making the national press with an article in Horse and Hound magazine.

Tichy is a member of the Shebbear College NSEA (National Schools Equestrian Association) team,

Pictured: Tichy and Sparhanger Velvet



who have gone from strength to strength this year, celebrating results at the regional Arena Eventing and Show Jumping NSEA competitions and qualifying for the national championships at Hickstead.

Lacrosse U20 World Championships

Two students from Bolton School Girls' Division, Lancashire, have been called up to their national teams to compete in the Lacrosse U20 World Championships, which will take place in Hong Kong later in the summer.

Ruby Hurt, a Year 13 student, who co-captained the Bolton School first team lacrosse side during the season just gone has been selected for the Wales U20 team and Hannah Faulkner, a Year 11 pupil, has been called up for the Scotland U20 team.

Pictured: Ruby Hurt and Hannah Faulkner



Lacrosse Coach Miss Andrea Donaghy said: "Congratulations to Ruby and Hannah for their selection to represent Wales and Scotland at the U20 World Championships – this is a prestigious event and their selection is testament to their hard work, dedication and excellent skill level in the sport."

Advertorial Feature

King Edward IV Multi Academy Trust

- Case Study

Forming part of the King Edward VI Multi Academy Trust, are two Camp Hill institutions for boys and girls. As part of the campus there are a number of outdoor pitches to cater for a plethora of sporting activities.

Despite a number of outdoor pitches both grass and tarmac, it was decided by the school that the existing tarmac surface located next to the indoor facilities needed to be replaced. The campus's existing fencing was broken and needed to be removed which would allow the courts to be extended by 8m.

The Trust wanted to take the opportunity to install a new surface that could offer more protection to the students and could be used by both the girls and boys campuses. Traditionally tarmacadam surfaces are considered to be more hard wearing, however in recent years the safety aspects of this type of surface has come under scrutiny.

With this in mind Blakedown Sport & Play worked with the school to select a surface that met the needs of the school. Having undergone rigorous surface interaction tests Playrite's Matchplay 2 was found to have higher levels of shock

absorption, slip resistance, impact attenuation and rotation resistance, making artificial grass an ideal choice for physical environments.

Playrite's Matchplay 2 synthetic grass surface is a multi-use surface specifically designed to be used for multiple sports. Matchplay 2 also benefits from a low sand content allowing for playtime to be conducted all year round and all weather conditions, as well as being available in a wide range of bright and vibrant colours, elevating a standard play area into a stimulating play environment.

The Playrite MatchPlay 2 surface was laid with permanent lines for 3 Tennis Courts and 3 Netball Courts along with painted lines for handball & football.

Steven Gori, from Blakedown Sports & Play commented "The Matchplay 2 surface offered our client the level of protection they required for their



pupils and allowed them to offer more sports all year round without the limitations of the weather".

Chris Pickles, Sales Director from Playrite commented "We're thrilled to have been part of this project. Our aim with the Matchplay 2 MUGA surface was to provide a reliable, high-performance solution for sports enthusiasts. We hope it inspires students to stay active and pursue their passions."

With its new Playrite Matchplay 2 surface, King Edwards IV Academy is able to offer excellent sporting experiences that foster an enjoyment of learning that allows every child the opportunity to achieve their full potential. A part of the external learning practices



the school provides for the children is a focus on sports and physical activities.

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Turf Tank automatic solution to SETU line marking problem

As pitch use grew at Ireland's South East Technological University (SETU) Arena, Grounds Manager David Grant needed a solution for increased pitch marking times, and the Turf Tank One was the automatic answer.





David Grant

The Waterford-based site is primarily for SETUs student societies and clubs, but the impressive multi-pitch facility is used by up to 250,000 people a year, including children as young as eight learning their sports and elite athletes playing in the League of Ireland and representing the country at the Olympics.

High-quality playing surfaces and indoor facilities are a significant draw, but as demand to use the site grew, David's team spent 630 hours line marking a year. Using the Turf Tank One, that has reduced to 120 hours.

David explains: "We started looking for an automatic solution to a problem because we were getting busier. We were finding that we were starting to cut corners manually lining."

"We had a man spending 630 hours lining every year. The Turf Tank does that in 120 hours. So, I now essentially have 15 weeks of extra labour that I would normally not have had. I can concentrate that on all the other small jobs that were always on a long list that we would get to but never did because we always had to go lining again."

"Now, the pressure for lining is gone. We don't have to worry anymore. If a booking comes in that we didn't know about last minute, it's not a big problem. The pitch will be lined in less than an hour."

Using Turf Tank One, the SETU team can mark a soccer pitch in 23 minutes and a GAA pitch from scratch in an hour. Reducing what used to take six and a half hours is significant for David, and it allows the facility to take last-minute bookings while always knowing the lines will be perfect.

"Before, if we had anything out of the ordinary, a smaller pitch, a different line marking, it was panic stations, really," David said: "How are we going to do it? How long is it going to take? How are we going to fit it into our routine? Now it's not a problem."

"There are so many variations of what we want on the tablet. We can literally select it and send it off. It's doing its job while we're off doing something else. And we know it's going to be done perfectly. It's the exact same line from the exact same spot every time."

"There's no variation. There's no worry that a new guy who's brilliant at lining is going to go out, but he's going to be different from me or someone else. The robot's going to do the exact same thing every time and has done since we've been using it."

Along with time savings and consistency, SETU has also halved its paint usage within the first three months of having the robot. The cost was around €11,000, and the money saved has been used to pay for the Turf Tank One.



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Flexible boarding: A necessity in supporting economic and cultural change

How has modern parenting increased the need for greater flexibility? Deputy Head at Downe House, Berkshire, Matthew Godfrey, explores the demand for flexi-boarding, how education and schools need to fit around a multitude of new parental demands and move away from a fixed model.



Matthew Godfrey

Like many good schools today, we are constantly seeking new and innovative ways to support the pupils and families within our community. As a boarding school, we have seen first-hand a notable evolution of the changing demands around boarding provision today. Every family and child is unique and as such, a one size fits all approach to boarding is unsustainable. We have to flex and adapt our boarding model to meet changing demands and offer greater support around economic and social diversity.

Modern boarding schools are rising to the challenge and adapting their offerings in line with current demand from parents. With this in mind, there has been a significant shift towards more flexible boarding provision. With more and more families being dual-salary households, parents are busy juggling careers alongside their child's education. They want peace of mind that their child is reaching their potential both academically and personally with extra-curricular provision all in one place. Boarding schools like ours have always sought to provide a home away from home environment, with rich pastoral care and one where communication between school and home is key.

Modern lifestyles

Yet, modern parenting and the impact of covid lockdowns has led to a greater demand for flexibility and adaptability for several reasons. Children undoubtedly struggled being away from the school setting and their peers during the pandemic, but they also spent more quality time with their families, and this has had a knock-on effect, with many children having gaps from both an educational, and social and emotional development perspective. As a result, parents have been more reluctant to enrol their child into full time boarding. Covid made people re-evaluate their lifestyles and what they wanted for their children in an educational setting. Boarding flexibility gives families the opportunity to slow down the pace of life, children can be children for longer with more space and more diversity.

Flexi-boarding allows working parents the freedom to pursue their busy careers, safe in the knowledge that their children are well cared for, but that they have the opportunity to stay over or come home whenever they want to (and at short notice), whether that is during the week or having quality time at the weekend. This alternative to traditional

boarding provision works by fitting around modern lifestyles. Simply having a choice around boarding is perhaps one of the most valued reasons parents choose schools like ours. The greater the variety of options, the more tailored the approach in catering to individual families and children's needs. In essence, it is an integral aspect of making education more accessible for all.

Flexi-boarding has also opened up more opportunities for those children who are reluctant to board or are more nervous about the idea of boarding life. The time they spend apart from their family will still encourage independence and self-reliance, and they will be able to spend time at home too – a best of both worlds approach. For parents wanting their child to dip their toes into the waters of boarding, this flexible approach could be an ideal option.

A diverse landscape

Interestingly, the landscape for diversifying boarding offerings has also been influenced by a number of other factors. Wanting to attract the best students is always a priority for schools, but with rising costs contributing to such a volatile economy, and the potential

threat of VAT being applied to independent school fees, there is more to consider. Schools are having to think outside of the box when it comes to diversifying their provision. Flexi-boarding on an ad-hoc basis can also make boarding more affordable for families, although it is worth bearing in mind that boarding fees cover an array of elements from comfortable accommodation and nutritious meals to pastoral care, educational and co-curricular activities.

At Downe House boarding has been a huge part of our culture, but we believe that a fully immersive education is the best option for our evolving community and that means embracing change. The benefits of flexi-boarding are clear, and demand is certainly growing. Parents enjoy the flexibility and have greater visibility around their child's school day, and they can make this fit around their own schedules. Logistically it works well for busy, next generation families because they can juggle work and home life in a more flexible way while ensuring their child's education and wellbeing remains a top priority. We are looking forward to developing our boarding offering further in the coming months.

Portable defibrillator

St Martin's School, Bournemouth, has been presented with a portable defibrillator thanks to parents' fundraising efforts.

They began fundraising after staff first aid training at the start of the academic year covered the life-or-death difference a defibrillator can make in the event of a cardiac arrest.

The school raised £540 to fund the battery pack and adult and child-sized electro pads, with

Pictured: Brett Bader from Lifeline Training presenting the defibrillator to Head Mrs Male, and pupils from the school

Lifeline Training, who delivered the staff first aid course, donating the defibrillator box itself.

Headteacher Mrs Male said: "This is vitally important for our school community – especially as one of our pupils has received care for a heart condition in the past, so it was very high on my priority list when I took up the Headship at the start of this year.

"All our staff are now fully trained and competent to use this

equipment. We hope we never have cause to use it, but we are extremely glad to have it should we ever need it."

St Martin's School, which celebrates its 110th anniversary this year, raised funds for their defibrillator selling tickets to their annual Dance and Talent Show, which took place in March, while the school PTA sold refreshments and collected donations.



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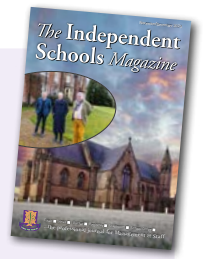
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Co-education news

Moulsford Prep School, Oxfordshire has announced plans for its Prep School (ages 7 – 13) to begin welcoming girls into Year 3 in 2026. The Pre-Prep (Pre-School to Year 2) has already successfully transitioned to co-education and by September 2031 (when girls currently in Reception will naturally progress into Year 8), the School will have girls in every year group.

With Year 3 becoming co-educational in September 2026, plenty of time has been allowed to finalise preparations for the transition, including any necessary adjustments to the curriculum, pastoral care, sports provision,

facilities and infrastructure. Headmaster, Ben Beardmore-Gray, will be sharing the plans with parents over the coming months, and inviting them to provide their input.

Chair of Governors Edward Boddington commented: “Societal changes form the background to this decision, with families, including many Moulsford families, increasingly seeking to educate their children together and in a co-educational environment. This is reflected across the independent sector which is seeing a clear shift towards co-education.”



Pictured: Moulsford Prep School



Under new ownership

The sale of Avondale Preparatory School, Wiltshire has been announced.

The co-educational day school with space for 180 children between two and 11 years old originally opened in 1923. It was acquired by Stuart Watson in 2013. The decision to sell came in order to allow him to move back to New Zealand with his young family.

Following a confidential sales process, it has been purchased by investor, David Allison of EduPartners – a UK-based Education Consultancy company. The company also owns Salterford House in Nottingham.

Pictured: Avondale Prep School

Jassi Sunner, from business property advisors, Christie & Co, who handled the sale said: “Stuart has successfully run Avondale for over 10 years... After a range of interest, we found interested parties had a wide range of plans for the school with differing future uses. Stuart decided to sell to David to keep the continuity of the school, and his strong affinity to the school meant he wanted to leave the staff and pupils in good hands with as little effect on them as possible.”

Avondale Preparatory School was sold for an undisclosed price.

Advertorial Feature

What do you want to say in July 2025? Thrive or survive?



Reflecting on your past academic year is a powerful exercise in personal development. It allows you to celebrate how far you have come personally and professionally. This shows where you have invested to make things happen for you and your community.

It is time to look at your portfolio to start strong in August 2024.

Invest in a pen and some paper. Let's take some time together.

1. What is the headline of your journey this year?

From August to July sounds boring doesn't it! Yes, get creative!

2. What experiences were of interest to you? Where did you raise your value?

Work out where you were in your flow and look at ways to increase this.

3. What risks is your portfolio facing?

Take some time to reflect on your inner and outer risks that can affect your growth.

4. What is your growth strategy?

Day by day you are growing your future with thoughts, feelings and actions. What do you need to learn or unlearn to step into your next?

As we take time to recover from the year that was, take a few days this summer to connect with the future you. Yes, the future you- a worthy investment!



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