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A word from our Editor

Looking beyond the Academics

If we are to embrace new ideas, raise our expectations of and aspirations for children, and really give teachers the support they need to do their job, I’d also suggest we have to have new measures of success that move beyond academic knowledge, and embrace both social and cultural areas. While quantitative analysis has a place in assessing the start and end point, what happens in between is descriptive, empirical and lived, and really values the profession of the school staff. Too often and too easily, the initiatives that many see working in their community or school are cut or changed or challenged because they don’t meet someone else’s criteria for success. In schools, we know this can be those hallowed exam grades carving a path to university, and a reversion to that idea that it’s the best, if not only measure of social mobility.

In his latest study, What Predicts a Successful Life? A Life-course Model of Wellbeing (84), Professor Richard Layard and his team at the London School of Economics’ Centre for Economic Performance have concluded that a child’s emotional health is far more important to their satisfaction levels as an adult than other factors (including academic success when young or wealth when older), another challenge to the assumption that academic achievement matters more than anything else. It was interesting, too, to see one of the most shared teacher blogs following the 2017 GCSE results relating to a boy who'd triumphed by getting two Fs in his GCSEs (85), his special school headteacher Jarlath O’Brien arguing that the child in question had overcome phenomenal challenges to get into and stay in school, and demonstrated life changing positive behaviour change while sticking to his studies as a result of the commitment of school staff and the support of his mum. Most would agree that we need to hear more about students like this.

About the Editor
Professor Sonia Blandford is Founder and CEO of Achievement for All and one of the UK’s leading practitioners of education. Sonia is passionate about raising the aspirations and improving the attainment of all children and young people regardless of their background or needs. This year, she was named in Debrett’s list of the Top 500 Most Influential People in the UK.
While grades are important, there are a myriad of measurements of success. Decision makers should listen hard to teachers as they talk about attendance and the disadvantaged – meaning that children want to be in school, and their families recognise its value. Some heads feel huge success if their children – who may be new to the country, or have been through trauma – are smiling at the end of the day, or feel able to approach them (or their staff) when they have an issue. Others celebrate the lunchtime club that has fostered friendships for children who’d felt isolated or the books children love to read. Or teachers can simply remember the day when pupils discovered a talent or a passion for something new.

Campaigns and initiatives driving these less celebrated outcomes may not get as much attention or the levels of funding seen elsewhere, but they are equally important in promoting success and – in turn – helping support those grades schools are after. I can trace my own desire to get on to the discovery of books and a love of reading. I see now how The Read On. Get On. Campaign, led by a coalition of charities, works to challenge head on the fact that a fifth of all children in England, and close to a third of the poorest children, are unable to read when they leave school - a crucial contributing factor in the educational divide.

I have found that learning and the area it covers can be a way to communicate with a family, and with individuals in it. If relevant, it can empower them to get a job, to open a bank account and manage a budget and secure a home. Of course, algebra and languages and Shakespeare are important and I’d never suggest for a minute that we shouldn’t be teaching and enjoying them and celebrating them. The introduction of the national curriculum in 1988 changed teaching and opened up the possibility that every child could access the same knowledge, skills and understanding in every subject. What was missing at this point was an understanding of social and cultural relevance.

Regardless of background, challenge and need, achievements come in a variety of forms, and in all avenues of life. Education must acknowledge and understand children’s basic needs and work (if necessary with other partner organisations) to try to meet them if it is to make a difference and allow them to enjoy a sense of their own self-worth and progress to carve out the kind of life they want, where they want to live it – moving forward to become a better version of themselves. Isn’t that everybody’s aspiration, every day?

Recognising that, we need to think, as we put today’s curriculum together, where we want it to take us. Instead of focusing on the big world where the same work is supposedly open to everyone, could we start closer to the actual places people live in, where they can extend through learning and language and experience? In schools where I have worked I’ve seen the hardest-to-reach children tune in and engage when teachers relate learning to their individual passions. Those might be gardening or running, computer games or fishing, building or basketball, music or the media. I’ve seen how, when nurtured and understood in a way that involves them, teachers can give those young people confidence in themselves and, so, a desire to learn more. That is core strength, and building social mobility from the inside out. But it depends on their needs being recognised, their talents being identified and their potential talents being spotted, embraced and encouraged. From early years to secondary school and beyond and from teacher and practitioner to children, young people and their parents and carers, the articles in this issue of Every Child Journal will shine a light on new ways of doing just that.

Editor
Professor Sonia Blandford
What is Good Leadership?

A toolkit designed to support the development of leadership in primary schools, clearly linked to Ofsted criteria for leadership and management.

The ‘What is Good Leadership?’ toolkit provides a holistic approach to developing the essential leadership skills within a school. It has been developed over 5 years working with schools in a wide range of contexts and drawing on national and international research.

WIGL? is written by Heather Clements and Ann O’Hara, both highly experienced educational consultants, who have worked with experts within specific areas to ensure that the descriptors in the toolkit truly represent the best practice nationally for each role identified.

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✓ Enabling a 360° view of an individual or whole school leadership team

“... the What is Good Leadership? tools provide an excellent basis for professional development, accountability, job descriptions and appraisal targets. The framework works well for me and undoubtedly the improved clarity around attributes of outstanding leadership have contributed to our recent outstanding inspection judgement.”

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Trauma and Attachment in the classroom
What are the consequences of turmoil in a child’s early life and how does it affect their behaviour and learning in school. Sue Gifford digs deeper into the issues and suggests some responses.
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As an antidote to an increasingly narrow curriculum, Park House School in Newbury adopted the Olympian values of the Get Set programme for its extra-curricular learning. It has transformed the outlook of the pupils towards those less fortunate than they are, explains Derek Peaple.

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Engaging and motivating children to learn to spell - playing with words, using all your senses and the power of a spelling app can work wonders argues James Passmore.

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Disadvantaged pupils achieve lower grades in north than in London

Disadvantaged children in the north of England achieve GCSE grades that are significantly worse than their counterparts in London, according to a report into education and skills by the Northern Powerhouse Partnership. (NPP)

Provisional results for 2017 show that northern 16-year-olds receiving free school meals achieved an average grade score of 39.9, which were 6.5 points below their peers in London and 1.3 points below those in England as a whole.

According to a spokesperson from the NPP, under the old system the figures might have equated to, for example, a northern 16-year-old receiving 6 B-grades and 3 Cs at GCSE, where a pupil of the equivalent level in London would receive 9 Bs.

The report also suggests that funding currently available through the free schools budget be geared to rebuilding dilapidated schools. Disproportionately few free schools have been established in the north of England, with only nine in the north-east, compared with 123 in London.

The report goes onto point to the success of the London Challenge, a school improvement programme launched by the last Labour government, which has been credited with significantly improving results at state schools in the capital.

Poorest children risk being ‘set up to fail’ by university diversity drive

Russell Group Leader, Dr Tim Bradshaw said that if top universities lowered entry requirements for disadvantaged children “too far”, it could lead to an increase in students struggling to keep up with their peers, and ultimately dropping out of courses.

“The difficulty would be if you went too far, I think you would find you would struggle to maintain the level of engagement of students throughout.”

He said that while grades could be dropped to a “certain level” for disadvantaged students, it would be “very dangerous” to drop them too low.

He continued to explain that if this happened, students would be “set up to fail”, adding: “If you go too far, the danger then is that you are not matching the student to the course and so therefore they may well struggle.

Academics from Durham University have previously argued that universities should be bolder in their use of contextual offers, and lower AAA offers to disadvantaged students as to CCC.

Bristol University is among the Russell Group universities to offer disadvantaged teenagers places for lower grades. Courses that may typically require top grades at A-level are now offered to “high potential” pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds with lower grades.
Internet Usage Makes Children Anxious

A new survey by the UK Safer Internet Centre reveals that two in five schoolchildren have felt worried or anxious on the internet in the last week – and one in 10 has experienced this frequently.

And almost half of young people said that in the last year they had experienced someone being mean to them over the internet, or they had been excluded online, the research revealed.

Will Gardner, a director of the UK Safer Internet Centre and CEO of Childnet charity, said: “The survey’s findings are encouraging, highlighting that the majority of young people’s experiences of the internet are positive, however we also see that there is a negative side, including where young people face pressures in their online friendships.”

72 per cent of young people wanted their school to teach them about cyber-bullying and managing friendships online, the survey found, and yet one in ten said that they had not been taught about this in school.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), said: “It’s vital that schools and parents work together to give young people the tools they need to navigate the internet safely and with confidence.” But he added that progress had been held back in schools because Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) is still not a statutory subject.

RSC Approach To Shakespeare Improves Children’s Language Skills

New research from the University of Warwick shows that using the Royal Shakespeare Company’s (RSC) approach to studying Shakespeare can significantly improve student language acquisition and skills, with some schools reporting better SATS and GCSE English scores as a result.

The researches’ key findings are:

- 95% of teachers said that using RSC methods to study Shakespeare resulted in their students becoming more willing to contribute ideas and opinions in class.
- 95% of teachers reported an increase in confidence and understanding of what they are capable of as students get to grips with and ‘crack’ Shakespeare.
- The way of working was of particular benefit for boys previously considered to be ‘disengaged’ or low-level learners.

Elsewhere in the research, senior school teachers agreed that the RSC approaches were especially helpful in preparing students for the new GCSE exam which requires them to critically analyse previously unseen sections of text.

Primary Headteachers generally echoed the widespread belief that since working with the RSC, KS2 SATS results in English Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (EGPS) had risen from 41.7% to 96.7%. In addition, 56.7% of those students had achieved higher levels than expected.
In July 2017, sat in my home office reflecting on the end of another full and mainly productive academic year, there was a realisation that, as a working class Professor, I might have something to contribute to the social mobility debate. A view that would be immersed in my experience, contributing to the class consciousness that has been subject to media activity and political debate over the last year. My aim in sharing thoughts on social mobility is to question the injustice of the current prevailing view of social mobility, that the working class have somehow failed and they should become more like the middle class. That is, pass the required exams to go to university, get a degree or two, buy their own house and live a healthy life, contributing to society and the economy. Not too dissimilar to my own story in some
ways, but lacking the notion of family and the tribal effect of the working class. What is needed is an alternative way of thinking about social mobility – a way of thinking that crucially listens to, engages and involves the working class in determining what their future should be. An alternative way that values partnership, mutuality and collaboration and which, by doing what is right, creates opportunities for all. What would different look like if we addressed working class questions, if we responded to old questions with new thinking?

**Why do working class children not achieve?**

The need to understand how and why children can learn is fundamental to pedagogy – how teachers teach. Getting it [teaching] right for the working class remains an ongoing challenge in many schools. An appropriate starting point might be to increase understanding of how working class, disadvantaged and SEND children learn, and refocusing teacher training and professional training on the majority of the population in schools, identifying what is needed to prepare children for work. It is also about changing the mindset of the adults and services around the school to improve the outcomes for all children. I have long known that that, if you change….of adults, you improve the attitudes and behaviours of the child.

**Why do working class families not participate fully in early years provision?**

Sure Start Children’s Centres were the main vehicles for ensuring good quality family services and provision were located in accessible places and welcoming to all. The aim for every Sure Start Centre was to improve outcomes for children and families.¹ There are some fine nursery settings that take that approach today. If we want working class families to fully participate in early years we need to see more of the same - to share the benefits of early years education by building a respectful relationship with families, and sustain that to help ensure growth and school readiness.
Why is there not the will to stop the growth of disadvantage among the working class?

Part of the problem is that the context of UK poverty has changed. Poverty is no longer just an issue for people out of work or living in social housing. It impacts on people with disabilities, people who’ve become ill and had to give up work, people in work, young people (including some just out of university), people renting from private landlords. The drive for welfare reform has been seen as an answer to the problems of disadvantage, but it’s failed to understand this changing context and, hence, the better ways (better housing, investment in communities - or reinvestment where cuts have decimated good work - and a continued drive to grow employment and provide good jobs that provide an income on or above a living wage) to address this.

Why is school considered not relevant by the working class?

A curriculum that is not socially and culturally relevant, that presents more barriers than opportunities will not engage children in learning. The national curriculum in England has been developed on knowledge and learning experienced by the middle class. There are solutions to this dilemma that, if implemented, would address the needs of all children. The first is to break down the barriers to learning by providing opportunities for all children to participate in social and cultural activities, sport, the arts, debating, volunteering, wider community based provision, museums, trips and
much more. The second requires us to relate the curriculum to the social context of the child and their future. All communities have a rich heritage, which can provide significant resources. In terms of their future, learning about the workplace can begin in primary school, increasing ambitions, breaking down barriers and providing relevance to learning. Increasing access to learning for all children should be the benchmark of a successful school.

**Why is working class success only measured by exam results?**

The annual media frenzy that follows primary phase national curriculum assessments (SATs) and secondary phase GCSE exam results only serves to remind the majority of the working class families that their children are disadvantaged, with private and grammar schools forming the majority at the top of published league tables. For the minority of working class students who do achieve, this is a demonstration that passing exams is a possibility at primary and secondary. However, recent primary SATs serve to prove the difficulties for those without the related social and cultural capital to respond to questions in the English paper. EPI Closing the Gap research reminds us that it will take decades to ‘close the gap.’ A more meaningful assessment at secondary phase would be destination outcomes; measuring students’ outcomes by where the examinations take them. If exam results are to be a single judgment of success, all forms of examinations should be considered providing a more rounded picture of what each school has to offer.

**Why is there a lack of ambition for the working class?**

There is no evidence that the working class cannot achieve - in education, employment, housing and health. There is also no evidence that the working class are any less likely to have a desire for success than others. What there is, though, is a lack of societal ambition outside those spurious targets (like university entry) that only
concern 50% of the population at best. To increase ambition for the working class there needs to be a mutual understanding of what is available in terms of alternatives, and engagement with the working class about what they actually want. By talking and listening, ambitions can be shared - a do with rather than do to approach.

So, are the working class born to fail?

Research would indicate that, rather than reducing the chances of failure within the working class over the last forty years, we have increased the possibility in housing, education and social care. This should not have happened, nor should it be allowed to continue. Back in 1973, the authors of the Born to Fail report referenced Tawney, saying, “The continuance of social evils is not due to the fact that we do not know what is right, but that we prefer to continue doing what is wrong. Those who have the power to remove them do not have the will, and those who have the will have not, as yet, the power.”

And there is no evidence that the attainment gap cannot be closed for all children, regardless of background, challenge or need. To recommend a national ambition set at 50% will allow excuses and caveats; creating a barrier to change. Evidence has shown (Impetus Foundation, 2014 ¹, Rowntree Foundation, 2016 ², PwC, 2016 ³ ) that the key to change is to develop an approach that engenders self-belief, building the core in every child at the earliest stages of their development: Aspiration, ‘I can’; Access, ‘I do’; Attainment, ‘I have’; and Achievement, ‘I am’.

Ultimately, it is about taking responsibility, owning a shared moral purpose and shared ambition and integrity that can provide the opportunities and resources needed for all children and their families to achieve. This is social justice in action and, possibly, social mobility that really works.

Extracts from ‘Born to Fail? A Working Class View’
http://www.johncattbookshop.com/born-to-fail

Professor Sonia Blandford is one of the country’s foremost experts on improving the education and aspirations of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. She focuses on providing the leadership in schools to create equal chances for all. Sonia was named in Debrett’s 2016 list of the Top 500 Most Influential People in the UK, and was among the 2016 Women of the Year. She is Vice Chair and Founding Trustee of the Chartered College of Teaching.

She is currently founder and CEO of the award-winning educational charity Achievement for All, which provides programmes to improve outcomes for children and young people aged two to 19 years, vulnerable to underachievement, in 4,000 early-years, school and post-16 settings in England and Wales; and visiting professor of education at UCL Institute of Education.

References

THINK LIKE A LEARNER!

A new practical guidebook to help children acquire the language, skills and self-awareness of successful learners

This book asks children to involve themselves in key questions about learning and develops their self-awareness as self-critical thinkers and learners. It asks:

• How do we think and talk about learning?
• What is ‘bouncebackability’ and how do you get it?
• How can we make sure our team learning is high quality?
• How does making choices help us to become more responsible for our own learning?

Ofsted has observed how children ‘really enjoyed learning’ in a school using the guidebook.

Hundreds of schools and thousands of children have used the questions and ideas from the ‘Think Like a Learner’ approach and the authors, Diana Pardoe and Tom Robson have now turned them into a workbook for children aged 8-12.

Comments from children:

• We now work harder
• It’s good to be in the challenge zone and get out of the comfort zone
• We understand we need to co-operate and know how to do it
• We understand that learning is our responsibility and that we have got to take part

Comments from teachers:

• The children are becoming more divergent thinkers
• They are more in control of their learning. They recognise what makes them successful learners and THEY have the responsibility for learning.
• When faced with difficult tasks the children are more prepared to have a go and to take a risk
• Improved communication skills
• Raised self-esteem

Carol Dweck has shown how important children’s self-concept as learners is to their performance, no matter what their ability and Bob Burden’s Myself As a Learner Scale (MALS) suggests how children’s self-concept as learners can grow when taking responsibility for assessing their own work. A child’s ability to reflect on their own thinking is now recognised as critical to them becoming resilient and successful learners.

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How are teachers and school leaders using research?

The push for more and better school-led research to improve practice and children’s learning has never been stronger. But many are skeptical about its value. Tim Cain investigates its current role and reception at the coal face.

In many countries throughout the world, schools are turning to research in order to improve what they are doing. In England, there have been concerted efforts to push headteachers and teachers to justify what they are doing with reference to research. For example, schools are expected to consult research to justify their use of Pupil Premium money. However, various academics are skeptical about the ‘use’
of research in schools. Among other issues, they fear that research will be chosen for its utilitarian value rather than its quality; that it will be sensationalised and over-simplified, that it will be used inappropriately, perhaps as a management tool to control teaching and learning (e.g. Hammersley 2013; James 2013; Whitty 2013). This has led me to ask, what is actually happening in schools? How are teachers and school leaders using research?

This article describes findings from several research projects in both Primary and Secondary schools. Most of these projects followed roughly the same design:

- the schools chose an aspect of their practice that they wanted to improve, often something that had been highlighted on their school development plan
- I sourced, read and selected three or four articles that described good research in the topic. Often, these were literature reviews (summaries of various studies); if no literature reviews were available, I chose single studies. (I sometimes used the EEF’s Toolkit or Hattie’s Visible Learning as a starting point to source articles.)
- I presented the articles to one of the school’s senior staff and we discussed ways in which they might be disseminated to other staff
- Volunteer teachers in the school read the articles and worked with them, either individually or collectively, usually over the course of one academic year
- I interviewed the volunteers who had worked with the research, asking them what they thought of it and how they had used it
- I analysed the interview data and published articles about my findings (e.g. Cain; 2015b).

This work is continuing, but there are several findings which seem to be consistent across different types of schools. They can be summarised as follows.
Using research is challenging but rewarding

Using research is hugely challenging. Schools are high-pressured places, teachers have continual calls on their attention, accountability measures are constant and punishing, there is never enough time. The realities of school life are summed up by this teacher:

Our curriculum, right from Year 1, is knowledge-based. The children need to learn this, this and this, and there’s not really room for open-ended things … When I was reading it [the research] I was thinking, ‘If I was home-schooling my child, this is the way I’d do it, this is absolutely fantastic’; but in a classroom where you’re charged with delivering this number of children to these standards, it’s very hard to take it [the research] on and run with it. (Y6 teacher)

Various teachers remarked on what they saw as a gap between the apparently problem-free world of research studies and the everyday reality of school classrooms, where there is always too little time and too much to do. I understood this (I was a classroom teacher for 19 years) and I was always impressed, as I arrived at each school to carry out interviews, to find that almost all the teachers, despite the difficulties, had somehow managed, in the hurly-burly of their professional lives, to read the research, think about it, criticise it intelligently and often adapt their practice in response to it. I suspect that the reason for this was because these teachers were particularly conscientious: they had volunteered for the project and did not want to let me down by opting out.

In addition, many teachers found the language of the research tough to understand and I think some of the statistical information in some of the articles was genuinely too complex; research reports are written primarily for other researchers, not practitioners! However, by strategically ignoring some of the information they were given, and critically reading the information with a focus on the implications for their practice, the teachers found that their efforts paid off. As one Assistant Principal commented:
I think that staff like, for want of a better word, the intellectualisation of it. That what we’re doing is not simply a craft that you can learn by copying somebody else, but it’s actually quite an intellectual pursuit. And having the chance to think deeply about what we do in the classroom, staff have really appreciated that. (Assistant Principal, Secondary School)

Coupled with this, there was an understanding, expressed by several interviewees, that research is ‘not about gimmicks’. Several had been involved in gimmicks previously, and referred to ideas such as ‘Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic Learning Styles’; and ‘Brain Gym’ as among the gimmicks that had, until recently, influenced thinking in schools. They saw academic research as an essential antidote to such gimmicks. Research was also seen as a necessary complement to experience: some interviewees explained that experienced staff can become stuck in a rut, and research can help to challenge them. As one teacher put it, ‘experience is a valuable thing in teaching but if you have been teaching the same thing for the last ten years what value is that?’

Research influences what teachers think about

As might be expected, research influenced the content of teachers’ thinking. It did this through some fairly specific means: it provided focuses for inquiry, challenged existing thinking and practice, provided concepts and suggested possible actions.

Providing focuses

Research provided focuses for the teachers to think about their own practice, in the light of the papers they read. This is important, because, in teaching, many aspects of practice are very closely interwoven: the subject matter that is taught is linked to the whole curriculum; to the teaching resources that the teacher has access to; to the school’s assessment practices; to the particular children with all their various needs.
and abilities; to the relationships between them; to their classroom behaviour and so on. In practice, it is often difficult to disentangle one aspect from another. However, research papers, with a strong focus on one specific aspect (such as the teaching of spelling or vocabulary or Fundamental British Values, gifted and talented students, etc.) enabled teachers to learn about one thing, whereas other means of learning (e.g. through coaching, mentoring or lesson observations) might involve many different aspects of practice.

**Challenging existing thinking and practice**

Often the research papers challenged thinking and practice. For example, the published research about teaching spelling had revealed that spelling was more effectively taught when teachers taught the spellings of words alongside their meanings, rather than in isolated spelling lists. Discussing this, the teachers in one school had agreed that their practice was somewhat patchy. Sometimes teachers taught the meanings of words alongside spellings, combining these by looking at the etymology of words. But this wasn’t consistent across the school and sometimes, children were given lists of words to learn as an isolated activity. Additionally, not all teachers taught children to use specific strategies for learning the spellings of new words. The teachers discussed this:

> We’ve talked about having maybe five words, introducing them to the children, spending that week working around those words, picking out the tricky parts of those words, which bits make it difficult to spell, talking about the meaning of those words and then giving them to the children to take home, rather than it being a set of ‘cold’ words that the children haven’t interacted with … With the children that we get here, they might not necessarily have those words in their vocabulary. It’s a vocabulary issue as well. (Y3 teacher)

The challenge, as they expressed it, was to ‘make words exciting’ so that children would develop a love of words that would carry into their reading and writing.

**Providing concepts**

Sometimes research articles helped teachers develop their concepts. In one of the primary schools I had worked, two teachers had attended a day’s course about Lesson Study, and reported back enthusiastically; consequently, school was about to introduce Lesson Study for the whole staff. This was a major development for the school and not every teacher was happy about it. However, the research papers helped to convince some them of its value:

> I misunderstood what Lesson Study was; it [the research] helped me to see that it was a way of examining your teaching, seeing how effective it is. I read that and thought, ‘ok – it’s about teachers reflecting on their own practice and discussing it with a colleague’. That clarified for me, what it was meant to be.

In particular, the research papers helped the teachers to see that, the purpose of observing lessons was not as a tool for performance management as they had originally thought, but a means for focusing on learning as a means to support teacher development.

**Suggesting possibilities for action**

New thinking sometimes led to new action. In the Lesson Study project, the teachers agreed to focus their attention on three particular students, chosen at an early stage of the project. They discussed the advantages of predicting, at the planning stage, how these particular students would respond to the lesson, and then comparing their predictions with their observations of what actually happened. In another project, based around gifted and talented children, the teachers realised that more able children tend to finish their work earlier than others and, hence, are given even more work to do. As the research pointed out, this is not necessarily appropriate because, … once they’ve got it [i.e. understood it], they’ve got it, they don’t need any more
practice in it … what they need is for that time to be filled up with something that is more demanding and then increasingly more demanding. What I’ve been interested in recently is the link between that and higher order questioning. And levels of demand not being, “this question is harder than that one”, but more deep learning into areas of philosophy and so they are beginning to generate their own deeper thinking. (Secondary Science teacher)

Inspired by the research, this teacher created boxes of files containing “not ‘some quite philosophical articles and higher order questions on laminated sheets’, so that the gifted and talented children would have more interesting activities to do, once they had finished their classwork.

Research influences how teachers think

What is often missed out of discussions around evidence-informed teaching is that research influences how teachers think, as well as what they think about. This happened in at least three different ways; through engaging with research, the teachers became more willing to experiment, they became more critical of the research, and they developed their understanding of evidence.

Willing to experiment

Several teachers described how their engagement with research had given them permission to experiment, despite pressures of inspection and observations that encouraged them to be risk-averse. Usually, as one secondary teacher said, ‘you don’t really want to experiment … What if it goes wrong? What if I’m on my own? Am I silly in thinking that this is a good idea?’

One example of experimentation came from a teacher who was carrying out an action research project about Fundamental British Values. She could see that much of the research was about knowledge of the values, and what was meant by each of the Fundamental British Values, but that knowledge alone was not sufficient:

Some of the observations we made, we could see children could answer a question: ‘What’s respect?’ and they could spiel something off, but could they actually live respectfully? Could they act upon that?
In order to bring children to a ‘lived experience’ of the Fundamental British Values, the teacher used a dance approach in which the children could express, physically and in relation to each other, the values they were learning. In this way, they moved from learning about values to experiencing these values and understanding them from the inside.

Being more critical
Engagement with research also prompted the teachers to be critical of the research. A recurrent phrase was ‘I don’t agree with that’, as teachers interrogated claims in the papers that failed to match their own experiences or ways of thinking. In some instances, teachers accurately identified contradictions and flaws in the reasoning within the papers. Sometimes they questioned the research (e.g. querying methods or sampling) and decided that it was not sufficiently robust to inform change. In one instance, in the Gifted and Talented project, a teacher decided that the values of the research were not her values: whereas the research tended to assume that Gifted and Talented students should be ‘stretched’ academically, she believed differently. Her own experiences had taught her that academically clever children could become anxious and even depressed if they were pushed too hard; her involvement with the research gave her a space to take a principled stand against the prevailing ethos.

Understanding evidence better
Perhaps as a consequence of increased criticality, the teachers appeared to develop their means of evaluating their work. In general, the teachers become more aware of what might count as ‘evidence’ (e.g. of improvement). They discussed differences between what they called ‘hard’ evidence (such as test data) and ‘soft’ evidence (such as observation data) and sometimes became more critical of ‘hard’ data, arguing that it needed to be considered alongside ‘soft’ data to be truly informative. To evaluate their own practice, some teachers also canvassed students’ perceptions, either through interviews or surveys. Some were also inspired to carry out action research projects of their own, which led to greater understanding of the complexity of educational situations.

Conclusions
For many writers on the subject, teachers are expected to use research in order to inform their decision-making. These writers see research as showing, for example, which reading scheme is the most effective in helping children to read. However, it seems that teachers also use research in a different way – to think about their own practice. Particularly when the research comes into discussions with colleagues, it enables teachers to talk about their own practice and how it might be different. In these discussions, research acted as what I have called the ‘third voice’, in conversation with the teacher’s self (the ‘first voice’) and colleagues (the ‘second voice’). When the teachers brought research into the conversation, it allowed them to see their own practice in a different light. This did not always lead to change because, sometimes, the research confirmed the rightness of their existing practice. But even when no practical changes were evident, the research allowed the teachers to think beyond their existing institutions and experience and to consider and re-consider their practice alongside others.

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As the work of Carol Dweck has proved, no matter how able, a child’s perception of themselves as learners will determine their academic careers. If it is poor it will:

- Undermine their resilience, so that they give up at the slightest obstacle
- Make them defensive learners, unwilling to challenge themselves
- Make them over-reliant on teachers and on received opinion
- Write-off successes as ‘flukes’
- Under-perform in exams and tests
- Have low aspirations and under-achieve in life

Whilst there are other self-esteem tests, no other test measures a child’s perception of themselves, specifically as learners, so well. This is why MALS has gone around the world as the key test to use to measure a child’s image of themselves as learners and thinkers. Using it will enable you to:

- Uncover, beneath external shows of confidence, which children have poor views of themselves as learners and therefore will be liable to under-perform
- Pinpoint exactly where their problems are
- Measure progress in developing ‘open-mindsets’ in children

Teacher Skills

The MALS is also a very subtle test of teacher performance – those teachers who succeed in lifting a child’s MALS score have the ability to motivate and teach the skills of independent learning… and vice versa! This too is often far from being easily visible.
Public Libraries
More Important Than You Might Imagine

Far from being just a repository for books, libraries play an important role in social learning and the health and well-being of children and society as a whole, argues Sue Williamson.
For me, she says ‘public libraries matter because they help to give a focus and an identity to the community they serve.’ And, what’s more she says, ‘reading is cool again’ thanks to the ‘headliners of the last decade that have made it so: Harry Potter, 50 Shades of Grey, Pride and Prejudice, The Da Vinci Code and Paddington Bear. Not necessarily all great literature, but they have encouraged complete strangers to talk to each other about books and their reading experience ….’

What is a library and why do libraries matter? Well, if you ask 40 people, the chances are that you will get 40 different answers because libraries mean different things to different people and people use libraries for different things at different stages of their lives.

For me, Public Libraries matter because they help to give a focus and an identity to the community they serve.

Whether it is information about the local area, clubs and societies, and activities for lonely people, the opportunity to feed a reading habit with bang up to date material or the need to access information about the major events in your life, such as a new job, your legal position in a dispute, what exactly the facts are behind the media reporting: a library can provide all of this.

It can help make sense of the morass of information that we are bombarded with on a daily basis. The phenomenon of ‘fake news’ has made people once again value the skills of a trained librarian who can act as an interpreter through this minefield.
instead of feeling that they don’t need them because everyone can use a search engine!

It can help you start your child or grandchild on a journey by providing one of their first cultural experiences at a Read and Rhyme time as they sit in an audience, sing along and react to a performance. At the same time, it provides a wealth of free material to stimulate their imaginations and open up the world to them at a time when they are most receptive and enquiring.

Increasingly, the public library service is opening people’s eyes to a wealth of opportunity in the digital age and supporting people who find the speed of technological change bewildering. It is also opening the doors to an age where we appreciate the role that art and culture have in one’s health and well-being as well as supporting people to navigate the tricky paths of finding health information.

Libraries are at the centre of strong, safe and sustainable communities, they help to give an identity to their community and they broker opportunity. They help to provide a future for children and young people and a community centre for older people. It is a known fact that proximity to a library is often a positive selling point for Estate Agents.

A public library can change people’s lives. It is a universal service from the cradle to the grave which is free at the point of contact. A good library should be a welcoming place, giving unbiased and unparalleled access to the world’s knowledge through a qualified, professional interpreter. Libraries of all kinds stand for intellectual
freedom, equality of opportunity and community cohesion and, the best bit: no-one is ever going to ask you to spend money or enquire why you are spending your time there.

The great looming tragedy is that those who make policy do not themselves use the public library service and they, therefore, have a picture in their mind of what the service is about. They talk about their not being relevant in the 21st Century or being nice but no longer affordable.

They do not see the 60 children and parents who attend a read and rhyme time, or the schemes such as Food in School Holidays that ensure that children who are latch key kids have somewhere safe to go where they are stimulated, occupied and fed.

Activities such as the annual Summer Reading Challenge, which encourages children to read six books in the summer holidays, really help children progress at school because, by the time they return in September after the long summer break, they pick up where they left off in the previous term. We have such positive feedback from parents about this scheme, with its focus on reading for fun and pleasure. If a child reads for pleasure by the time they reach the age of 11, then they are much more likely to be successful in all walks of life, not just academically and professionally, but also personally as well, because of the effect on their general well-being.

And it is not just children. The benefits of escapist fiction are huge. They take the reader away from the stresses and strains and conflicts of everyday life, supporting relaxation and reducing stress levels. Reading is and should be fun and whatever you enjoy is what you should read, whether it be a graphic novel, a Mills and Boon romance, a biography or something that scares you. Life is definitely too short and there is much too much great reading material out there to read something you don't want to! Publishing is the greatest contributor to the Arts economy and you only need to look at TV schedules, the films at your local cinema or even the Christmas adverts to be made aware of the role that books and literature have on our entertainment.

Reading fiction is escapism and it is fun. Romantic fiction can raise endorphins; crime fiction, the most popular genre because it appeals to men and women, reaffirms our sense of the power of justice and raises our levels of problem solving ability; horror gives us the opportunity to experience the terrifying in a safe environment and fantasy is by far the most popular genre amongst young people. Reading is cool again and it is the headliners of the last decade that have made it so: Harry Potter, 50 Shades of Grey, Pride and Prejudice, The Da Vinci Code and Paddington Bear. Not necessarily all great literature, but they have encouraged complete strangers to talk to each other about books and their reading experience.

There are lots of ways you can get your reading too: most library services now offer e books, e audiobooks, talking books and Large Print as well as picture books, paperbacks and hardbacks. In addition, let's not forget that reading is a crucial skill: without it, you cannot function in the 21st century, so why not make it as accessible as possible.
Personally, I hate the slogan: Libraries are not just about books. Why would you promote a negative? Why not say: Libraries have the most fantastic selection of books to suit all ages and tastes and they are free, but libraries also offer so much more.

The six Universal Offers that all Libraries work to in England as devised by the Society of Chief Librarians are Learning, Information, Digital, Reading, Health and Culture. Everything we do in terms of activity in our Libraries supports those offers and will also, I guarantee, support the main aims and objectives of the local council. In my case, this is to raise aspiration, grow the economy, promote health and well-being and keep people connected. Our activity might look ‘nice’ or ‘fluffy’ on the surface, but there will always be an underpinning agenda.

Keeping learning has been identified as one of the 5 Ways to Well-Being and the computer age makes so many opportunities available for online learning. This is a key area where libraries level the playing field through our People’s Network computers, granting everyone access to the Internet through their public library service.

The great philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, endowed so many public libraries to give everyone the opportunity to gain knowledge and learning regardless of economic standing or background. That is so true today. In my borough, 13% of people are digitally illiterate in an age where digital competence is becoming an essential skill. It’s not just about owning the computer or the tablet or the Smartphone; there are the costs of the broadband to enable you to use it, so all our libraries in my borough and most across the country now have wi-fi. There is also the issue of learning the skills to go beyond Facebook or messaging. To my mind, in this field, libraries are more important than ever.

We also offer space and opportunity to our Adult Learning programme to deliver formal learning in a non-threatening environment in our library spaces, to encourage many who felt that learning had not been a great experience to give it another go. Just to add, in the Liverpool City region alone, 143,000 people do not have basic qualifications. Through our public libraries, we can support them to get, either the skills that they need to move forward and get into employment or volunteering.

Libraries also hold the keys to the world of Local History, helping people to nurture a sense of civic pride in achievement and also, through learning from the past, to look to the future and the possibilities inherent in innovation and enterprise. The rise in interest in family history and tracing one’s family tree has opened a whole new seam for libraries, many of whom have some amazing treasures to share.

In the health arena, libraries have a huge role to play. Seventy-four per cent of health information that people access through Google is simply wrong and a librarian can help people access the information they need through pointing them to verified and verifiable schemes, the librarian’s mantra. The three Books on Prescription schemes operated by most public libraries, do much to help people learn about common mental health issues, cope with dementia, either as a sufferer or a carer, and help a parent or a young person manage the increasingly worrying number of issues that our young people are reporting in terms of their mental health and well-being. All my staff are trained as Dementia Friends.
In my borough, we have seen the benefits of delivering an Arts on Prescription programme through our libraries, a return on investment of a staggering £11.55 for each £1 spent. But so much of what we do is not measurable: who can say what the elderly gentleman who comes in to read the paper and do the jigsaw puzzle in our library is gaining? We can't, but I bet he could. Also, we know that, through our Cultural Hubs programme, we have opened the eyes of many who don’t normally engage with the Arts, but who will come to their library for an evening of theatre, music or even a gig and then maybe go on to explore further the wonderful rich world of the arts.

Sometimes we get some phenomenal feedback, like the parent who wrote in to say that their child had increased two reading levels at school and she attributed that to the Summer Reading Challenge or the parent whose child has difficulty speaking to anyone outside her family because of an identified medical condition, but she has no problem talking to the library staff because she has been coming to the library since she was tiny and looks on the staff as family. I once had a letter from a lady who said that coming to our Central Library in her lunch hour saved her sanity in the six-month period following the death of her boss when his replacement made her life a misery. It enabled her to recharge her batteries and have the strength to go back in the afternoon. Or there was the gentleman who handed me a cheque for £366 one year and said that he felt we were worth £1 a day of his money and could we put this to good use. The value of libraries is reflected in the following:

“A library is a good place to go when you feel unhappy, for there, in a book, you may find encouragement and comfort. A library is a good place to go when you feel bewildered or undecided, for there, in a book, you may have your question answered. Books are good company, in sad times and happy times, for books are people - people who have managed to stay alive by hiding between the covers of a book.”  
[Letters of Note; Troy (MI, USA) Public Library, 1971]  
E.B. White
Every librarian I know has stories like this. Sometimes they come from people in the public eye, like Caitlin Moran who advocates tirelessly for public libraries and you hear, well they would say that, as people willfully ignore the background story of a chaotic life made sense of by the haven of the public library. The author Jenn Ashworth, who speaks very movingly of her turbulent teenage years and the impact of the public library on her life, is another example. The trouble is, that by the time they have a voice, these people are successful, articulate and, in both these cases, writers. But I see latch key children in my libraries every night, children who are looking for somewhere safe, who want to be listened to, who are crying out for someone to push back when they push the boundaries. Who knows where some of them may be in 30 years’ time and what they will say about the benefits of their library experience?

Our libraries are repositories for the local Food Bank, we deliver a Winter Warmth programme, we have a housebound service which ensures that those who cannot get out get the service brought to them, we do T’ai Chi and chair-based exercises, we support those who have suffered strokes, those who are first time mums and we offer volunteering opportunities. And, to answer those who say that they are declining in popularity: 1 in 2 people regularly visit a library, which equates to 224.6 million visits a year.* More people went into a library last year than attended Premier League football matches, the top10 Tourist Attractions in the UK and the Cinema combined. If you think about that for a minute, that is a staggering number and most organisations would kill for the reach of a platform like that.

In addition, it is thought that Public Libraries save the NHS £27.5 million a year, which is the equivalent of £1.32 per person per annum based on reduced numbers of visits to GPs through improved access to health information.**

Public Libraries, are, in short, an invaluable resource not just an important one. I would challenge anyone who is in the policy making arena to spend some time in their local library, talk to the staff, watch the people who use it and then decide if it has value. It is not enough to say I don’t use it, so it has no value; I haven’t been to school for 40 years and have only accessed hospital services a handful of times, but I would never question my contribution to education or the health service. I do not have to use it to value it. In the words of Carl Sagan:

“Books permit us to voyage through time, to tap the wisdom of our ancestors. The library connects us with the insight and knowledge, painfully extracted from Nature, of the greatest minds that ever were, with the best teachers, drawn from the entire planet and from all our history, to instruct us without tiring, and to inspire us to make our own contribution to the collective knowledge of the human species. I think the health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries.”

Finally, it is no accident that the outgoing President of the United States usually endows a library. They recognise that information is power and knowledge helps you wield it wisely. Ultimately, the final justification for the importance of the public library is quite simply, that the pen, whether it be physical or digital, is mightier than the sword. We lose them at our peril.

Sue Williamson, Head of Library Services, St Helens Council.

References

*Carnegie Report: Shine a Light
**Arts Council England Study: The Benefits to Health and Well-Being of Public Libraries
Climbing Frames
Real Time Manageable Assessment

CLIMBING FRAMES SCHOOL PUPIL TRACKING ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The Climbing Frames Pupil Tracking Service is a digital assessment framework that replaces the now defunct national curriculum levels. It relates directly to the new curriculum and enables individual pupil’s progress to be tracked across foundation and core subjects.

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Trauma and Attachment in the classroom
What are the consequences of turmoil in a child’s early life and how does it affect their behaviour and learning in school. **Sue Gifford** digs deeper into the issues and suggests some responses.

Children who are adopted and fostered are likely to have experienced substantial, sustained trauma in their early lives before ending up in, what we would hope is a safe place, in a foster home or an adoptive family. This trauma will have adversely affected their ability to make secure attachments and, consequently, their ability to manage relationships in the world. Thus, school will usually be a place of fear for them because they are unable to use the safety of adults appropriately and will not be able to make strong peer relationships.

I want to explore the following:

- What is the trauma they may have suffered?
- How does this affect their attachment behaviours?
- What might these attachment behaviours look like in the classroom?
- What can be done to help a child to feel safe and to begin to engage in learning?

Although I will be exploring these topics with reference to looked after and adopted children, there may be other children in your classrooms who, due to circumstances, have also experienced early years trauma and may, therefore, have fragile or insecure attachments and who may also struggle to engage in learning.

### Trauma

When I talk about early years trauma I am not talking necessarily about discreet events, but also about chronic, persistent experiences that continue with no relief over a long period of time. In the table below I list the most recognised traumas which will adversely affect attachments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trauma which may affect attachment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separation from parent</td>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>An unstable or unsafe environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Neglect</td>
<td>Serious Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Physical abuse</td>
<td>Intrusive medical procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Sexual abuse</td>
<td>Premature birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Emotional abuse</td>
<td>Postnatal depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Alcohol/Drug abuse</td>
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*Criteria used when deciding whether to remove children*
Of the criteria used to assess whether or not a child should be removed from their family it is now known that the most harmful and the hardest to recover from is neglect. With physical, emotional and sexual abuses, however much pain is caused, at least the child is important enough to elicit a response from others. However, with neglect, the child is invisible. Neglect means that no one interacts with them. They are usually left to cry for hours at a time, spending hours starving, in dirty nappies, too hot or too cold and isolated from the interaction of others. They are not picked up, cuddled, spoken to or played with. When they are fed, they are prop fed. No one meets their needs.

**Attachment Behaviours**

So what is attachment and how do these traumas affect the ability of children to make healthy attachments? Even before a child is born their brain is being formed and their receptive memory is already on line. So, if the mum is under stress the developing baby will also be under stress and if the mum is a victim of domestic violence, the child will also have experienced domestic violence. Similarly, any drugs and alcohol that the mum takes will be passed to the baby. In addition to substance abuse, the mum is likely not to be eating regularly, so the baby will have periods of starvation in utero. In such circumstances, the baby is born already traumatised.

When babies are born, they display attachment behaviours, such as crying, to get their needs met. If there is an emotionally available adult to meet those needs the baby’s brain will be hardwired to make secure attachment relationships. The baby knows that whenever they have a need, it will be met. As the baby grows, they will be able to explore the world, knowing that if they have a need they can return to their primary caregiver who will manage their needs and enable them to return to exploring the world. If we think of a seesaw, with attachment needs at one end and exploration of the world as the other end, a securely attached child will be able move
smoothly between the two and will know that they are loveable and worthy of care, that others are dependable and that they can manage distress.

However, children who are already born traumatised and whose needs are not appropriately met by an emotionally available and attuned adult, will not be able to manage relationships or the world appropriately. Depending on their experience of adults, they will develop an insecure ambivalent attachment, an insecure avoidant attachment or a disorganised attachment.

**Insecure Ambivalent Attachment**

This occurs when the primary caregiver is inconsistent in the way they respond when a baby expresses their needs. Such children will realise quickly that they can't trust the adult to respond to them, so they increase their attachment behaviours in order to keep the adult close all the time. These children will be very clingy and not easily soothed. The caregiver is likely to find this behaviour overwhelming and may withdraw from the child and this confirms to the child that adults are inconsistent and unpredictable. These children will be unsure whether they are okay, they will be unsure whether people are interested in them and will need to keep adults close in order to feel okay. Their seesaw is not balanced. They will keep needing to get their attachment needs met and will be unable to explore the world appropriately. These children will be the ones in the classroom who are very needy and constantly needing to be noticed by the teacher. They will not be able to develop to working independently.

**Insecure Avoidant Attachment**

This occurs when the primary caregiver is not emotionally available and, therefore, does not respond when a baby expresses their needs. Such children quickly realise that no one will respond to their needs, so they stop expressing them. They realise that to stay safe and survive they need to downplay feelings, behave so as not to anger others and they learn to be very self-reliant. In other words they avoid relationship with others. They still have the same needs as any child, but these needs are internalised and they never ask for help or support. Their seesaw is not balanced. They seem able to explore the world appropriately without the need for support from others. These children will be the ones in a classroom that either are praised for behaving so well or they are the children that slip under the radar because they do nothing to make themselves noticed. Their needs are hidden. They appear to work very well independently, but often fail to achieve because any problem they encounter that might need some support from a teacher is never presented.

**Disorganised Attachment**

This occurs when the primary caregiver is scary, either because they are violent and aggressive, or because they are scared and, therefore, unable to protect the baby from the violence of others. Such children are in turmoil. They need their caregiver to meet their needs and keep them safe but, if they approach their caregiver, they put themselves into danger. So they have no idea what to do. They recognise that others are scary, unpredictable, unavailable, threatening and exploitative. They believe that the reason others are abusive or violent towards them is that they themselves are bad and unworthy of being cared for. They learn that in order to survive they must be in control and control the behaviours of others. So, sometimes they present highly self-reliant rejecting behaviours that keep others at a distance and sometimes they present highly coercive behaviours that keep others close. They are not in a relationship – rather they employ any strategy they can to stay in control. This makes them very unpredictable. Their seesaw is spinning. They cannot get their needs met
because of their need to control and neither can they successfully explore the world because they experience it as a frightening place full of threat. In the classroom, these are the children who will be labelled as disruptive, difficult and out of control. They are often hyperactive and may spend a significant amount of time excluded from the classroom.

What might these attachment behaviours look like in the classroom?

In describing the attachment behaviours I have already touched on what these might look like. In summary, the insecure ambivalent child is likely to present as very needy and highly anxious, the insecure avoidant child is likely to appear as independent, quiet, studious and invisible and the disorganised child is likely to appear as disruptive, threatening and controlling and out of control. These are, of course, generalisations, but if there is a child in the classroom displaying any of these behaviours, then the teacher should be curious about what is driving these behaviours. Children's behaviour is their way of communicating feelings and beliefs to the world and as such should not be dismissed.

The other important thing to have in mind is 'Think Toddler'. What do I mean? Children's emotional maturity is developmental and builds on previous experiences. Children begin life by having needs. They need to be fed, noticed, clothed, have their nappies changed, made to feel special, helped to feel safe, kept warm and dry and communicated with. As these needs are met appropriately, as described above, the child develops a healthy sense of self and of others. They learn how to communicate,
how to play, how to build relationships and how to use others to meet their needs when their primary caregiver is not available. This enables them to move from mums and toddlers groups to preschool, into nursery and finally into school. They will be able to start to make friendships and have playdates.

Children who have experienced attachment trauma in their early life will be stuck at the baby or toddler stage. They won’t have the resilience of their peers to manage the complexities of relationships with others because no one has helped them to develop these skills. We wouldn’t expect a two year old to manage for a full day in a Year 1 or maybe a Year 5 class, but that is exactly what our traumatised children have to do. They need to be helped to manage as a 2-year-old so that they can move on to be a successful 3-year-old and then a 4-year-old and so on. If they are developmentally 2 and being asked to manage as a 6-year-old they will fail. It takes many years of filling in the gaps of their development for them to catch up. It is important to schools to recognise the child in their class not only has distorted attachment behaviours, but also has a huge mismatch between their chronological age and their emotional age.

What can be done to help a child to feel safe and to begin to engage in learning?

There are many ways in which children with attachment trauma can be supported in the classroom. The first thing to consider is to identify a key adult who can be their attachment figure in the classroom. Their role will be to liaise with the parents at the beginning and end of the day to ensure a smooth transition between home and school. They will also be the person the child can go to if they need help or support and may also be the 1:1 worker for that child in the classroom. Initially, the key adult should spend time building a relationship with the child before any learning can take place.

Ideally, this key adult will have some insight into the early life experiences of the child so that they can understand the behaviour communications of the child and
respond appropriately. It is also important that the key adult remains consistent and doesn’t change. Children with attachment trauma need one safe adult in school, initially, with the hope that, over time, as they catch up emotionally they may also be able to trust others.

Other things to consider might be:

- **Sensory breaks**: A child who has experienced attachment trauma will probably not have had anyone to help them integrate the sensory elements of their body and the world around them. This may mean that to sit still for too long is painful for them and they may not be able to make sense of and manage the sensory stimuli in the classroom. When a child is overwhelmed by too much sensory information that they can’t process they may become overwhelmed and no longer able to learn. Sensory breaks will enable them to regulate and re-engage with learning. A sensory break might be as simple as a few moments in the playground to run and jump. A child for whom sensory regulation is a problem would benefit from an assessment by an occupational therapist who specialises in sensory integration. They will be able to suggest an appropriate sensory diet to help the child regulate.

- **Location in the classroom**: For most children who have experienced attachment trauma the world is a terrifying place. It is tempting for teachers to put the disruptive child near the front of the class near to their desk so they can keep an eye on them. For the child, this makes things worse as they believe that all kinds of danger may be coming at them from behind and they are some distance from an escape route. If they are seated with their back to the wall, near to an exit they will feel safer and more able to engage with learning.
Visual timetable: Children with attachment trauma are less able to manage uncertainty than securely attached children. A visual timetable to show the structure of the day, together with advance warnings when the next activity is due to start, will help them to manage transitions better.

Behaviour Management Policies: Avoid behaviour management strategies which put children into shame. Using the ‘naughty cloud’ (or similar) where a child has their name displayed for all to see because of some misdemeanour or unacceptable behaviour reinforces the belief ‘I am bad’ and, because they believe that, they will end up on the naughty cloud they will get themselves put there on their terms. Much better to use a system of managing behaviour which uses natural consequences (such as helping a staff member to clean the graffiti they have drawn on the wall) and reparation (such as helping the teacher with a task if they have been rude to them).

Unstructured times: ‘Think Toddler’. Children with attachment trauma will not have learned the rules of sharing and collaborative play that their peers have learned. They will find break times, lunch times and unstructured times in the classroom terrifying. They may try to control, misunderstand the intentions of their friends or become socially isolated. They need to be provided with support and structure to help them use this time well, without shaming them into feeling that they are somehow being punished by not being allowed to join in.

Noticing the invisible child: These children appear to be managing and self-reliant, but may well be internalising their needs and feelings and may, in fact, not be achieving. These are the children who are difficult to engage with but cause no concern in the classroom, but whose parents may report that they come home from school angry, unregulated and difficult to manage. This may be because they are so exhausted with managing in school that their feelings spill out that minute the school day ends. Don’t dismiss the parents as over-anxious if this what they are reporting and don’t expect the child to ask for help if they are struggling. Instead, use the relationship they have with the key adult in school to build up the confidence of the child and help them to trust enough to be able to ask and know that the adults will respond appropriately.

Homework: The most important thing for a child with attachment trauma is to learn how to build relationships with adults and this starts with their adoptive or foster parents. If homework threatens to damage this relationship, then agree a strategy with the parents around whether or not homework is done and don’t punish a child who is still trying to learn how to manage relationships because their homework is not done.

Work as a team with the parents: The parents know their children and their children’s early life history, so work as a team to provide the right level of support to help the child to feel safe and build relationships. It is also crucial that the adults in a child’s life are consistent in the way they deal with challenges that the child might present and that they share information with each other.

These are just a few of the strategies that might help a child to manage school better and start to engage with learning so that they can reach their potential. In summary, understand the trauma a child has suffered and how that has impacted on their attachment behaviours, provide the child with a consistent key attachment figure in school, stand in the shoes of the child and try to see the classroom from their perspective and ‘Think Toddler’.

Sue Clifford MBE.
Too many children are leaving primary schools unable to read well. Everyone can make an impact urges Sonia Blandford.

Last summer one in four children left primary school unable to read well (DfE, 2017). This means that over 150,000 children started secondary school in the Autumn without the basic reading skills needed to access the curriculum. For many of these children, without gaining fluency in reading, they may never catch up; they enter secondary school with low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in their own abilities. By the time they leave secondary school, their chances of a successful and fulfilling life will have been greatly reduced; some will not have mastered the basic levels of literacy to gain sustainable employment. Too many children in this country are being left behind at a young age. It does not have to be like this; with the right approach in school and the support of their parents and carers, the multiple barriers that some children face are easily disassembled. We know that getting children reading from a young age and into the habit of reading every day, will help to improve their imagination and communication skills and brighten their future prospects.

Literacy levels and reading in disadvantaged communities

For children growing up in low income communities, the situation is worse; it is estimated that up to two in five children have difficulties with literacy. This gap opens early. Toddlers and other vulnerable children from disadvantaged communities, can be many months behind their more advantaged peers in terms of language proficiency. They are less likely to have parents who read to them or simply talk to
them. Save the Children (2014) highlighted the main routes to poor reading skills by age 11: poor language development up to the age of 5 and poor progress in reading between 5 and 11 years.

Speech, language and communication are a central area for children’s development in early education. Hart and Risley’s (1995) landmark study in America highlighted the big gap in children’s vocabulary at age 3; they found that children from disadvantaged homes had far fewer words than their more advantaged peers. Blanden and Mackin (2010) suggest that 3-year-old children from disadvantaged backgrounds are as much as 10 months behind their more advantaged peers in vocabulary development and 15 months behind at age 5. Literacy is as much about speech, language and communication as it is about reading and writing. Parents and carers contribute to this when they talk to and with their young children, read to them or tell them stories; they help to construct the foundational blocks for a lifetime of reading well.
The Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL) project carried out in Sheffield more than twenty years ago with pre-school children and their families, still resonates today. The three and four-years-old in the intervention group had better achievement in language and literacy than non-intervention children, and, even more, for children of mothers with no qualifications, the benefits extended to the age of seven (Nutbrown et. al., 2005). Parental engagement, particularly in the early years, is still the single most important contributory factor to children's development, well-being and achievement.

Recently, the National Literacy Trust, working with Experian, identified areas in England most at risk of literacy problems. What they found, was that although low levels of literacy are found in areas of the country with high unemployment, multiple low income households and social problems, they are not confined to these areas. They are present in small pockets, in almost every community across the country and are often intergenerational; 86% of all constituencies have at least one ward with serious literacy problems (Douglas, 2017). For children in some of the most disadvantaged communities, the chances are that their parents cannot read; data shows that around 35% of adults in some of the deprived wards of the UK have the reading skills of an 11-year-old (BIS, 2011). Earlier research for the Read On Get On campaign, set up in 2014, by a coalition of organisations committed to a 2025 goal of every child reading well by age 11 found that children from low income families in rural areas, market towns and coastal areas are more likely to be poor readers. What the research shows is the need for a continuing focus on supporting children's reading; areas which have seen rapid progress in children's reading skills over recent years have not have not always been able to sustain it (Save the Children, 2014). Reading and reading well is everyone's business.

The National Literacy Trust, which currently leads the Read On Get On campaign, are looking to broaden the definition of 'reading well' (National Literacy Trust, 2017) in line with OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) thinking on PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) which tests the
performance of 15 year olds in reading, mathematics and science, the definition looks towards the affective and behavioural dimensions of reading, alongside the cognitive dimension (National Literacy Trust, 2017). This encompasses such areas as daily reading, the enjoyment of reading and identifying as a reader.

**Expanding literacy**

Literacy is not only about reading and writing well, but about story-telling, developing imagination and creativity. Schools and early years settings have a key role in supporting children and young people in these areas. The landmark Bristol Study (Wells, 1987), which explored the development of language with a sample of 128 children from the age of 13 months through to school age, highlighted the importance of adults being interested in what children are saying and entering into real conversations with them. Whitebread (2003) advocates that early years educators do the same by providing opportunities for meaningful conversations between groups of children, and between children and adults. Other research shows the importance of a child’s growing control of the spoken language for the development of thinking skills; the more precisely language is used, the more children are enabled to generalise, categorise, to manipulate ideas and to explore ideas of cause and effect (Riley and Reedy, 2003). The children’s communication charity I CAN affirms the importance of language as a key skill, “central to children’s intellectual, social and emotional development.”; children with poor communication skills are more likely to have behavioural issues in social situations.

For schools and other educational settings, creating a literacy culture in the broader context, rather like a total immersion in a foreign language, encourages and supports the development of good reading skills. An audit might focus across leadership, teaching and learning, parent and carer engagement and wider or extra-curricular activities (Achievement for All). It is looking at where change is needed, being creative and thinking of new ways of presenting ideas; they may not always be conventional. In one recent example, a teacher took an unconventional route to support a parent; the outcomes were extremely positive and life changing; the mother in a family of six boys realised her low expectations were holding them back. She was supported by her children’s teacher as she embarked on a programme to improve her literacy. As direct consequence, her middle four boys moved from being on the SEND register. Their mother’s motivation and raised self-esteem and confidence were reflected onto her children, and her youngest has just started school.
with the highest expectations, loving the fact his mum is chair of the school PTA (Blandford, 2017). Often, it is simple changes in multiple areas of practice which make the difference.

Opportunities in school for pupils to discuss and share ideas and present to the wider group supports the development of many literacy skills; the Debate Mate core programme, working with schools in areas of high child poverty, has provided a further platform for this. In the classroom, it is allowing time for children and young people to work in groups, teams or in pairs, both on a formal and informal basis, and allowing time for thinking, reflecting, questioning and imagining. These skills are both developed through reading and develop reading: reading allows children and young people to develop their potential.

Simple changes are often all it takes. Examples from schools working with Achievement for All show the change in a Year 3 boy who loved reading to his little brother at home, but was a reluctant reader in school, often disruptive and was at risk of not meeting his literacy targets. His teacher made him a reading mentor to other Year 3 children. The impact was immediate. Acting as a reading mentor with Year 3 pupils twice weekly had an immediate impact on his self-esteem— he enjoyed the responsibility, became more focused, less disruptive, proved to be a positive and supportive role model and had better attainment. In another school, pupils with SEND engaged in one-to-one literacy extra-curricular activity with role models. The pupils developed a different outlook towards learning through raised attainment and a willingness to take part in activities. In another school, with high levels of poor literacy skills amongst new Year 7 pupils, the school invited parents in for workshops on how to support their children at home. Not only did their children's attainment improve, but many parents went on to achieve NVQ qualifications in literacy.

Achievement for All works with schools, early years setting and further education colleges across the country supporting them in getting better outcomes for their children and young people. Through our evidence-based framework, we have reached over 100,000 children and young people experiencing challenges, needs
and disadvantage, improving their outcomes in reading, writing and maths, up to 50% higher than the expected outcomes for all children. With our schools, we want to ensure that all children and young people have good levels of literacy and can thrive.

The Read On Get On Campaign calls for action across schools, families, communities and government by encouraging: Parents and carers to read to or with their child for just ten minutes a day; Volunteering in schemes that help children with reading and language; Schools, the voluntary sector, policy makers and the private sector developing programmes, interventions and partnerships to help all to read; and Government parties embracing the 2025 goal of all children reading well by age 11 in their manifestos, setting out how they support this (Save the Children, 2014).

The Vision for Literacy Business Pledge launched by National Literacy Trust in 2015, is seeing more and more organisations, signing up to tackle literacy challenges in their workforce, the local communities and on a national level; many have developed initiatives for schools, for example, the Premier League Reading Stars.

At Achievement for All, we know that reading is the key to helping children and young people learn and fulfil their potential. That is why we are running our popular 100 million minutes challenge again this year from 1st - 9th March 2018. We want all schools, early years settings, colleges, parents, carers, childminders and other community groups across England and Wales to sign up.

Last year, Monks Abbey Primary School in Lincoln won the challenge. One of 447 primary schools in England that took part in the challenge and raced to the top of the leaderboard after 420 pupils read for an incredible 667,895 minutes. Their prize, courtesy of Peters, was a brand new reading area worth £10,000. Charlotte Briggs, a Year 6 teacher at Monks Abbey Primary School, said:

“The impact the new reading area has had has been phenomenal. It has not only made such a wonderful change to our learning environment, but has provided an exciting place for all our children to read and, for many, sparked an interest in exploring a range of texts. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Peters and Achievement for All for enabling us to continue on our journey of being a reading school and creating an inviting space for our children to develop their love for reading.”

Sonia Blandford, CEO of Achievement for All, said:

“Across the UK, up to two in five children in poorer communities have difficulties with literacy. Reading is key to helping children and young people learn and fulfil their potential.”

Sign up to the challenge and make everyone a reader.

References

100 million minutes
details below:

What is it? The 100 Million Minutes Reading Challenge will see children and young people try to collectively read.

100 million minutes in a week! The challenge will kick off at 9am on Thursday 1st March 2018 (World Book Day) and run until 5pm on Friday 9th March 2018.

Registration for the challenge opens on Thursday 9th November 2017. Any schools, settings, families or groups who want to get involved should visit www.100MillionMinutes.org, where they can sign up for the challenge.

How will it work? After registering, all schools, settings and individuals/families will be asked to choose a Challenge Champion – one person who is responsible for logging the number of minutes read throughout the week.

The challenge is FREE for all participants and no fundraising is necessary. However, fundraising on behalf of Achievement for All during the week will be welcomed. Sponsorship forms are available on the website.

Participants will receive a range of resources for taking part – including bookmarks, and certificates. There will also be prizes for the schools, settings and groups who clock the highest average number of reading minutes per child!
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A brilliant new assessment tool for children’s early phonological awareness from the developers of the Sandwell Early Numeracy Test-R

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SPARRK was trialled extensively in Sandwell with individual children for over two years and was found to be very efficient in both identifying early which children have problems, but also responding to them. It could also work very well as a screening tool for a whole class.

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There are no other tests that assess phonological awareness for young children. SPARRK checks if children have got some of the basic concepts required to be phonologically aware, like long and short in long and short sounds and the assessment is totally picture-based so very child-friendly.

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Intervening Early With The Tree of Life
A creative way to help school children talk about themselves
Narrative therapy, children telling the stories of their lives and culture, can be an effective early intervention that prevents more serious mental health issues developing in children. **Carl Dutton** explains.

There is evidence that supporting families and carers, building resilience through to adulthood and supporting self-care reduces the burden of mental and physical ill health over the whole life course, reducing the cost of future interventions, improving economic growth and reducing health inequalities.

We look at how the use of a specific intervention called The Tree of Life can have a positive effect on the mental health and well-being of school aged children. We will show how it can be used for children who are newly arrived to the United Kingdom to talk about their culture and history as well as worries/anxiety about being newly arrived. And also how it can be used as a way to help children talk about themselves, their family and other support systems, and the strengths and aspirations they have for the future.

We want to encourage schools to use such a creative approach to aid children and young people’s mental health and well-being in a non-threatening and open manner that allows for expression and reflection to take place.

The use of early intervention in respect of mental health is vitally important for children and young people so that they are better able to manage worries/anxiety, feel confident to speak up, and be able to develop positive functioning in social, emotional, behavioural and academic areas - areas which often can be seriously impacted by mental health issues.

Using a simple technique such as the Tree of Life could go some way to help schools meet this call for early intervention. It is low cost in terms of hours required by the staff who implement it and resources required to run such a programme include a quiet space to draw/paint/craft, materials to do these things, and some refreshments.

**The Tree of Life**

The Tree of Life is a programme developed from the ideas from narrative therapy, which is a form of family therapy. Narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives. It views problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives (see Alice Morgan (2000). What is narrative therapy? An easy to read introduction. p.2. Dulwich Centre Publications).

The programme developed and my own adaptation came from the work of Ncazelom Ncube who
describes her work with children in Southern Africa with those affected by HIV/AIDS, poverty, and conflict.

She describes the work in a very accessible paper called *The Tree of Life Project: Using narrative ideas in work with vulnerable children in Southern Africa* (The international journal of narrative therapy and community work No1 2006).

I had seen the paper and also others on the use of the Tree Of Life and developed its use with asylum and refugee children who had newly arrived to schools in Liverpool where I work and then included local children following conversations with the schools to open it up to a wider group.

The programme is divided into four areas with the children encouraged to work on each area. They include the following:

**The Roots** - This is a chance to mark down using writing, paints, and craft those things in their history that are important about culture, people and places. They are the things that make us who we are. Some are well-known and other things less so.

**The Trunk** - This represents our own strengths and qualities. Things we value and are important to us. It might be a skill or a particular trait we have. They represent our inner strengths which we can use to help us in difficult times.

**The branches and leaves** - This represents hopes and aspirations for the future. Where and what do you want to go and be. It holds the hopes and dreams for a future with the knowledge that the roots and trunk are needed to help get there.

**The Fruits and Bugs** - This can be about achievements and what they are proud of. The bugs can be seen as problems and challenges that they face.

I have adapted the original Tree of Life as described in Ncube’s paper, but only a little, to fit with a school setting in Liverpool where the situation and environment is different than that of the children she worked with in Southern Africa.

**Process**

Each session should take between one to one and a half hours depending on age of children and size of group. This allows for time to warm up using a few drama/fun games to create group cohesion and trust, time to create the drawing, space to share and reflect with each other and also ask questions, and finally a warm down activity. Sessions should follow a similar pattern/ritual because it provides security and predictability if the child is anxious, worried, or may have a neuro-developmental condition.

Having a range of games to play on the theme of trees or being in a wood can increase creativity and decrease anxiety in the children and young people who take part.

Starting the sessions also with a range of pictures of trees from around the world also helps children identify trees from different places and can increase narratives to develop times and places where the tree is significant.

**Example One.**

In one group with all boys we would start each session with a jointly created woodland scene. The boys would become animals in the woods, and trees and take journeys and adventures in the woods. It allowed them to develop stories and use their imagination as a warming up process to the drawing/painting of their own particular tree.

Warming up is vitally important to “build group cohesion and spontaneity” (Blatner, A. (1973).Acting-In, Practical Applications of Psychodramatic Methods, p.11. Springer).

Each part of the Tree is worked through weekly and also can be gone back to the following week. Some young people feel the urge to do everything at once, while others take their time either, because they find it hard to start or that ideas take time to develop.
Example Two.
In a session with teenage young people who were all newly arrived to the United Kingdom, we discovered in the roots the importance of cultural identity through shared languages, music and foods. One of the young women talked about her home in South America and how she missed the food, music and bright colours in the streets. During our time together as a group, we played music via phones from different parts of the world. The young woman spoke about how she never really got an opportunity to speak about her culture and how important it was in respect of identity.

The Tree of Life also allows for stories to develop, both on an individual basis, but also as a collective and during the many sessions I have run over the past few years this has been the case. As the facilitator, it is important to be flexible within the framework and that doing something creative may mean that you go in a slightly different direction than you had originally planned. It is important to allow this to happen and encourage as a shared story may develop which may lead to group discussion/reflection.

Example Three.
One young person in a group stuck glass stones in the Tree canopy which he said were special stones with magical powers. It developed into a discussion with the group about what magical powers would they want to change things and how would they use the powers. Again, stories developed and a shared story was created about things wished for and how they might be able to get them. Often not easily and usually through some adventure and obstacle to overcome.

It has been well-received in all the schools across Liverpool which asked for the programme to be run and initial feedback is very positive from the young people and the school staff who have co-facilitated the sessions.
Over the time I have been using this method, it has been scored via questionnaire as 63% as excellent and 37% as very good with no negative feedback noted, although some schools wanted the sessions to go on longer, as did some of the young people.

At the end of the sessions, we often do a combined tree together to represent the group and gain feedback in a less formal way and each child is given a certificate of attendance for completing the sessions. In some of the schools we have also provided each child with a small plant to grow and nurture, such as rosemary, which is able to survive tough conditions and grow in most yards, in a pot, or a garden.

It is important to mark and celebrate the work acknowledging what the children and young people have done.

**Final Comments**

The Tree of Life as a programme is easily implementable and requires a small amount of resources. It meets the needs of helping children and young people talk about themselves, their lives and culture, and is something that enhances emotional health and wellbeing in a normal way.

It has potential to help schools and staff to support the emotional health and well-being of the children, offers space for children to be creative and expressive, and can aid assessment in terms of development.

**Feedback**

**Teachers**
- It was great. The children were allowed to explore their thoughts and thinking process in their own time.
- It encouraged them to consider wider issues
- Child Led.
- It gave the students time to share where they come from in a positive and creative way.

**Children and Young people.**
- It was relaxing. It made me feel calm
- Some of the things we talked about were hard
- I felt creative.
- I felt happy and relaxed.
- It was hard to talk about family.
- I liked role playing.

**References**

1. Mental Health services provided in schools are some of the most accessible for CYP. This is because most CYP attend school, access to school-based services does not require a clinical diagnosis, and schools are often the first point of contact for CYP and their families when they begin to experience mental health problems. A 2017 joint report by the Health and Education Select Committees emphasised the importance of a whole-school approach to mental health, mental health training for teachers, and co-ordinating schools and children and young people’s mental health services.
2. A key part of schools’ mental health work across the entire education system is preventative; for example, building resilience, promoting well-being, and destigmatising mental health issues through Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE). (Postnote Number 563 October 2017 p.2).
3. Graham Allen MP was asked by the then Prime Minister to review the use of early intervention programs for children and families and concluded that, “If we intervene early enough, we can give children a vital social and emotional foundation which will help to keep them happy, healthy and achieving throughout their lives.” (Graham Allen MP. Early Intervention: The Next Steps. 2011).
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In the eye of the ‘perfect storm’

Dr Fiona Pienaar and Dr Patrick Johnston explore what support and training schools need to address spiraling pupil and staff mental health needs.

The frequently reported increase in the number of children and young people experiencing challenges to their mental health has prompted a description of the situation as a ‘perfect storm’ [Ref 1]. Given the critical role and position of teachers in the lives of children and young people, we could describe teachers as finding themselves in the ‘eye’ of that ‘perfect storm’.

Teachers reported that pupils today are bringing more worries into the classroom than they did five years ago, with 96% of Head Teachers noting that their pupil’s ability to learn was impeded by these worries [Ref 3]. This is consistent with many academic studies demonstrating a strong link between mental health difficulties in children and young people with poor educational achievement and consequent lifetime disadvantage. These increasingly complex issues which teachers are facing in their classrooms are frequently outside of their skill set and training: 92% of surveyed Head Teachers identified that teaching staff are managing issues that go beyond their teaching role [Ref 3].

At the same time as we are experiencing an increase in both the numbers of children and young people reporting with mental health difficulties, as well as the complexities of these issues, we are faced with challenges in the retention of newly qualified teachers. It is reported that half of young teachers are considering quitting the profession [Ref 4], with a third of teachers who started work in 2010 already leaving the profession [Ref 5]. The National Union of Teachers (NUT), Young Teachers Working Party, surveyed more than 3,000 young teachers in April this year [Ref 4]. Of those surveyed, 85% described difficulties maintaining an adequate work-life balance with the pressures of their role.

We know that an estimated one in ten children and young people have a diagnosable mental disorder, that this is described as the equivalent of three pupils in every classroom, [Ref 2] and that they are likely struggling with their mental health at a level that we should be considering referring them to specialist support such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The data that we continue to quote dates back to 2004, although it is hoped that a new prevalence study will be published early 2018, giving us a much needed update.

In the absence of recent national data, what we do know today is that senior leaders and teachers are reporting a rise in the number of children presenting with mental health difficulties within the school. In a recent joint publication between the National Association of Head Teachers and Place2Be, 93% of Head Teachers reported that a greater proportion of children are presenting with mental health difficulties, with 96% noting that their pupils were struggling with mental health problems that were affecting their ability to learn [Ref 6].
balance, similar to the recent findings from the NAHT annual recruitment survey [Ref 6]. Furthermore, nearly 50% of young teachers cited concerns about the effect of teaching on their own mental health. Clearly, the connection between an adequate work-life balance and the challenges on teachers’ mental health cannot be ignored.

There is currently little attention paid to the mental health of teachers. They are expected to be ‘available’ (mentally, emotionally, socially and cognitively) to all their students and at times, for parents and carers. With a growing population of children and young people expected to attend school over the coming years, coupled with the complexity and challenges of the issues brought into school, are we simply asking too much of teachers today?

Education can play an important role in promoting good mental health; the Government has recently committed additional resources to every secondary school by providing funding for a teacher from each secondary school to be trained in Mental Health First Aid [Ref 7]. This is a positive step forward in equipping some teachers with the skills and knowledge to identify and respond to emerging mental health problems in school, however these plans are currently limited to secondary schools and only one teacher per school.

Whilst it is important to remember that teachers are not mental health professionals, in many cases they are well placed in aiding the identification of children and young people with mental health difficulties through the relationships and understanding they are in a position to build with their pupils. Relationships are fundamental for children and young people to feel attached and secure in the educational environment, for some pupils this will be the only stable attachment that they have in their life. However, questions must be addressed about the availability of teachers to be present to build these relationships with their pupils when they themselves at times are overwhelmed and, for some, struggling with their own wellbeing.

In the recently published report from the Education and Health Select Committee’s on Children and young people’s mental health – the role of education, the importance of initial teacher training and the inclusion of mental health training was highlighted. The initial teacher training framework published in July 2016 states that: “providers should emphasise the importance of emotional development such
as attachment issues and mental health on pupils’ performance, supporting trainees to recognise typical child and adolescent development, and to respond to atypical development” [Ref 8]. With the implementation of this framework, mental health will feature more prominently on all initial teacher training courses. However, what is missing from the framework is the importance of teachers examining and protecting their own mental health.

‘Mental Health Champions – Class Teacher’, is a training programme developed by Place2Be. The programme involves a series of facilitated experiential training and consultation sessions, aimed at upskilling teachers understanding of mental health and wellbeing, with the expected outcomes of positive impacts on teaching, pupil learning and achievement as well as a positive impact on the job satisfaction of trained teachers. This programme aims to support teachers in the application of their learning in the classroom setting, utilising a toolkit of practical strategies to support classroom management, behaviour and learning as well as building positive working relationships with pupils, parents and carers, and families. Unique to Place2Be’s programmes is a confidential reflective session (Place2Think), with an experienced child and adolescent therapist that provides trainees with a space to discuss issues which they are finding troubling, whether they are related to students or to other issues which may be causing anxiety or stress. These Place2Think sessions also allow a space for ‘processing the learning’ delivered during the programme.

An independent review of this training programme identified that teachers who participated in the training had an increased level of confidence and ability when identifying and support pupils with mental health difficulties [Ref 9]. Furthermore, there was also further confidence evident amongst trained teachers when working with challenging parents and carers. Overall, those who participated in the programme had an ability for greater self-reflection and a better understanding of how their own feelings and state of mind can affect their own capabilities, resulting in improved personal wellbeing.

With the growing number of children and young people struggling with their mental health, teachers are at the frontline each day, trying to make sense of behaviour, emotions and the myriad of issues and life experiences that challenge their pupils.
What is needed is a commitment to ensuring that teachers feel equipped to recognise when there might be emerging signs of mental ill-health and to feel confident in how they might respond. Response is two-fold in that teachers should feel able to respond in the classroom to children and young people that they have concerns about as well as feeling confident that they are in a position to seek advice and support from a professional based in the school who can then offer in-school support or refer on to more specialised services.

This raises a number of recommendations. It is vital that Government ensures that there are sufficient funds ringfenced to support compulsory Initial Teacher Training on mental health and mental ill-health, as recommended by the Carter Review [Ref 10].

Critically, let us not forget the mental health of teachers. This commitment to funding should be from both the Department of Health and the Department of Education. There is a large body of research identifying that mental health challenges in adulthood often originate in childhood or adolescence and these are both education and health issues.

Funding should also include provision for a mental health professional in each school. This will ensure that teachers and all school staff are supported as soon as possible when they seek insight and direction about a pupil they might have concerns about. This school-based mental health professional would forge the critical relationships with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team and other external statutory services. These connections are essential for, not only information and guidance but for the smooth and timely referral process should a child or young person require more specialised support.

Ideally, every school should benefit from the presence of a local CAMHS professional for one day each week to work closely with the school-based mental health professional, providing that more specialised advice, early screening, treatment for those meeting the criteria for diagnosis into specialist services [Ref 1] and onward referral. This regular presence of a specialist will provide additional support for teachers and school staff.

Our understanding of mental health and mental ill-health are constantly evolving, as are the issues that challenge our children and young people. Funding for ongoing continuing professional development is essential to ensure that our teachers and school staff stay abreast of developments.

Schools are excellent at pastoral care but this is more often than not, reactive; a response to mental health challenges as they arise. This approach is often driven by a lack of funding and knowledge as to how to develop a ‘whole school approach’ to mental health. School leaders need to be supported by a commitment from the government that they will ringfence funding on an ongoing basis so that we can train teachers, support them, educate children and young people about their mental health, help them develop the coping skills that underpin resilience and act as early as possible when concerns emerge.

Without commitment to funding, education and support, teachers will always only be able to react rather than feel confident in the management of their own mental health and in their understanding of the mental health of their pupils.

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Dr Fiona Pienaar is Director of Clinical Services at Place2Be.
Dr Patrick Johnston is Director of Learning at Place2Be.
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CTL/18
Time for Leaders: Putting Leadership First In Education

Coleen R Jackson and Egle Pranckuniene

This is the first of two articles about Education leadership in Lithuania. The article focuses on a research project, funded by the EU and Lithuania Government, called Time for Leaders, a project designed to bring about change and a greater understanding of leadership in Lithuanian Schools.

Since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1990, the Lithuanian system of education has seen major reforms in curriculum, school structures, testing of students’ achievement and the decentralization of governance. Education is one of the major priorities for further development, along with innovation and the knowledge economy. To fully embed these social changes, Lithuanian education needs to be radically reformed and given new objectives. Over the last three decades major changes have been implemented addressing the structure of the Lithuanian educational system; quality and the creation of the necessary conditions for social-pedagogical self-development and strengthening of relations between educational institutions. The Time for Leaders project shows how the government is taking this a step further and implementing significant changes in education through school leadership.
The context of education in Lithuania

Lithuania is one of the Baltic states with a population of 2,810,865 (as at December 2017). There are 1268 general education schools, app. 400,000 students and 45,374 teachers. Gaining independence in 1990, led to new possibilities being created for social, cultural, economic and political developments that correspond with national aspirations. This historic shift has demanded a change in the attitude and perspective climate of Lithuanian society: a basic understanding of democratic values: a new political and economic literacy: and the maturation of a moral culture.

Recently the Lithuanian government published a 2030 Vision statement. The strategy indicates that education is of prime importance and that the current education system lacks flexibility (p 20) and underestimates the importance of critical thinking, creativity and pro-action (and innovation). Therefore, any developments in education should take into account the new challenges and opportunities for Lithuania as it makes its contribution to the EU (p.3). Education is organised through The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) whose function is to formulate and execute the national policy and since July 2010 municipalities have had responsibility for a local area.

The 2030 Vision statement emphasized the need for education to be about preparing individuals for a knowledge society, a secure society and one that can compete economically (p1). To ensure this happens the focus has been placed on the independence of schools as learning communities and where the transparency of activity is ensured. To do this the government proposed that strategic planning should be introduced at all levels (p 7) with a view towards community self-
governance. When in place it should give increased openness and collaboration between schools and their communities. But, to do all of this there needs to be a change of understanding about the leadership of Lithuanian Schools and The Time for Leaders Project has provided that resolute focus.

**Time for Leaders project**

The national project Lyderių laikas: Time for Leaders (1) aimed to develop leadership capacity of all educators: teachers, formal leaders of school, municipality and state level and stakeholders (2). The project began in 2009 and has provided the opportunity to develop a variety of professional development opportunities: MA studies in educational leadership, long-term informal programmes on educational leadership, national and international study visits, short-term training programmes, group and individual coaching, and creative project-based work. As part of the project these opportunities were offered firstly to 15 out of 60 municipalities in Lithuania. At 2017 the new stage of the project was started involving the rest of 45 municipalities. This national investment, led by the state-owned Education Supply Centre with two partners – non-governmental Centre for School Improvement and ISM university of business and economics- continues to strive to raise professionalism and coordination of action towards improvement of student learning.

**An absolute focus on leadership in education**

As the project was addressing leaders of all levels of education the concept of system leadership became the most important concept. **System leadership** is understood as the aim to improve each school and the entire education system by attracting, nurturing and educating leaders at all levels – classroom, school, municipality and state (2). The second critical component within the project is the concept of Leadership for learning and in our terms is about the creation of powerful and equal conditions for learners, professionals, and the entire system in which leaders ‘persistently and publicly focus their and the attention of others on teaching and learning’ (3) Sustainable Leadership).

Leadership is needed not for the leaders and their self-creation but for the improvement of students’ learning something not previously considered within the system. The educational leader is not just a formal role but, every responsible, creative and open-minded professional striving to create sustainable learning experiences for students based on a clear moral purpose of education. This kind of leadership needs a positive environment based on certain values: responsibility, respect to each other and to other professionals, mutual trust, support and empowerment. Leaders need to lead the learning movement from the teaching paradigm to the learning paradigm. It is important not only to help learners achieving learning outcomes, but also to develop their capacity for continuous learning (achievement); know and apply the full range of learning strategies; remove all obstacles to learning (access), to love and to the trust learners and to strengthen their desire to learn (aspirations) (4).

**Model of Leadership**

Our universal model of leadership development was conceptualised by Prof. Vilma Žydžių naitė and Dr. Gintautas Cibulskas (5). As the phenomenon of leadership is not static, the model uses a three-dimensional space framed by three axis: learning, involvement and outcome-oriented action.

The vector of Leadership represents a gradual movement and spreading in the space of LEARNING-INVOLVEMENT-ACTION. This model of leadership development was designed using all the components of the project alongside setting outcomes for student learning and creating learning possibilities.
In this model:

- **Learning axis** shows leaders as permanent learners. They are aware of their own learning needs based on the changing context and demands; the learning axis represents the path of professional development and personal transformation.

- **Involvement axis** shows leaders are not individualistic but communal and social. This axis represents the path from isolated and individualistic culture towards professional learning communities.

- **Axis of outcome-oriented action** represents the path from being passive and individualistic towards coordinated and meaningful joint action which has clear outcomes for students’ learning. Leadership is not an end in itself but it is purposeful and fruitful.

**Components that informed the work**

Some simple models of professional development are viewed as cause and effect (6 and 7), others add in other elements and components (8) and then there are more complex approaches such (9). We were also interested in the transformative notion of the model offered by Kennedy 2014 (10). This project demanded a different approach to professional development as seen in Lithuania and one that ensured is coped with the complexities, multi levels and layers.

The core components included:
The elements shown in the diagram above directly involved and impacted on the participants. However, there were other components involved as such in the extended diagram below.

It is difficult to capture in a diagram the importance of all the elements, how they are inter-related, the ordering, the content, the shift in learning processes for a professional learning experience that was coupled in how change was managed that had to impact on an education system across the whole country. International evidence suggests that the progress of educational reform depends on teachers’ individual and collective capacity and its link with school-wide capacity for promoting pupils’ learning. Building capacity is therefore critical with its complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organizational conditions and culture, and infrastructure of support. Put together, it gives individuals, groups, whole school communities and school systems the power to get involved in and sustain learning over time.

**Project approach to professional learning**

Therefore, our underlying approach to professional learning embraced developing professional learning communities and provided multiple opportunities for professional learning concentrated within the educational community of 15 municipalities. The intervention within the municipality had two aims:

a) systemic change within the municipality by the development and implementation of a unique leadership development project; and

b) the ‘growth’ of leadership capacity and cultural change that creates a learning community that has a direct impact on students learning.
The educational community of each municipality was offered a variety of professional learning forms:

- Consultancy and group coaching: each municipality formed a strategic creative team, which developed and implemented a unique leadership development project. A group of 2-3 consultants worked with the team for 2 years providing professional support based on needs.
- Informal programme in educational leadership.
- MA programme in Educational Leadership:
- Virtual leadership network.
- National and regional leadership forums.
- Study visits to other municipalities and abroad.

Impact stories from the project

Our approach to professional learning has been very much an integral part of this project. All the elements were necessary to create a systemic approach to change with the resultant impact on individuals, teams and schools. This is reflected in the following impact stories:

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<td>Rita Elmonienų, project coordinator at Rokiškis municipality indicates the level of involvement of the teams.</td>
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‘Our learning was constructed in a way that supported the development of our project. 15 leaders took part in the informal programmes, 4 leaders successfully completed MA studies, 16 members of our creative team participated in study visits to Poland, Germany and Utena (Lithuania). Our creative team used all that potential to develop our project System of teachers ‘self-evaluation to improve student learning’

Teacher Daiva is talking about her personal transformation:

“The main impact of this project is learning of new mental patterns, the feeling of professional freedom and responsibility. Informal leadership program did break the stereotype of a professional development program – it was based on our experience. The project “Time for Leaders” inspired me to learn and to be a role model for the others. I wish to become a good listener, to learn it from our trainers.”

School director Darius considers the change in his leadership role:

“The project was a catalyst for me as a school director. Now I’m feeling more confident, I do pay more attention to a regular reflection, and as a result of that I’m making better decisions. Being a school director you need to understand the principles of strategy development, be aware of possible challenges and how to cope with them. Here I see the importance of consultancy as an effective tool of professional support.”

Vaiva Juškienų, Dean of a Teacher Training College, graduated from MA programme in educational leadership, she describes her learning journey:

“By studying educational leadership I expanded my understanding of the role of school and teacher. During my studies I wanted to strengthen my leadership capacities but I had a “hidden” goal as well. I wanted to learn from my co-students about their views of the teaching profession; and what kind of teacher do we need today for our schools. I am now using this information to develop new teacher training programmes based on the experience of my studies involving new colleagues whom I met during this programme.”

School director Loreta summarised the impact of the project for the participating schools and municipalities:

“analysing the data from the longitudinal study on the impact of the project, it indicated that the MA programme, informal programme, as well as other activities of the project affected not only as school principals but the whole school community has changed, there is much more shared leadership, change at schools is more sustainable.”
Overall impact of Time for Leaders

Concentrating on different forms of professional learning at the municipality level helped in reaching a “critical mass” of educational leaders, ready to initiate and implement systemic change, creating collaborative culture and consolidating efforts for the improvement of student learning.

“Time for Leaders 2” proved that this consolidated approach towards municipality level has led to the much needed systemic change at municipality level. The longitudinal study proved that the dimensions of leadership for learning are more expressed at schools of municipalities which participated in the project. There is more collaboration between municipality and schools implementing systemic change, there are more opportunities for teacher leadership and professional learning, and a more open dialogue about students learning.

The impact of the overall project has been tracked throughout its lifetime and like our model of professional learning there is an element of complexity in considering impact. The diagram below indicates that complexity and how we considered impact indicators as we worked through each element. It is too early to assess the impact on student performance on longer term changes towards leadership for learning, which may manifest themselves through inspection and review reports.

As the project is now in its tenth year we are still looking at ways to sustain, enhance and continually improve our work in this arena. Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) offer a lens to review this in terms of capital and the capital the project has created. They talk of five different types of capital that can be used in terms of understanding and engagement (Professional, Human, Social, Moral and Decision-making).

It is our view that through this project we have engaged participants to at least four of these areas and any further work will incorporate the decision-making element to ensure we continue to enhance leadership. Through capitalising on this element of professional capital in those involved in Lithuanian schools it is intended
ultimately to impact on the quality of teaching and student learning.

Looking to the future

Through application for further EU funding it is hoped to create a self-developing national leadership platform to improve students’ learning; The platform has three main components to increase professional capital:

- **Decision making capital:** 45 municipalities will create and implement long-term leadership development projects to improve students’ learning by introducing sustainable practices of professional learning and decision making; We are planning to involve majority of municipalities and around 50 % schools of Lithuania.

- **Social capital:** platform for mutual professional support will be created. It will include different ways of networking (regionally, nationally and internationally). The platform will include peer learning, coaching and consultancy, the movement of project alumni to influence regional and national policies.

- **Human capital:** further development of leadership competences in MA, informal and other programs for more than 1000 leaders from different levels: national, regional and school.

We hope that our efforts will help to accumulate the needed amount of professional capital: our leaders will be ready to make responsible and creative decisions, they will get professional support in networks and they will constantly develop their leadership competencies. We will be united for one aim – the learning progress of every child.

Coleen R Jackson and Egle Pranckuniene.

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Maureen Hunt explains why movement is so essential for young children’s learning.

Children in the UK are amongst the lowest age in the world when they start school. This was a decision first made in 1876 on the Factory Act’s recommendation, to stop child labour, resulting in making school compulsory for children aged between five and ten in 1880. In fact, only 22% of the world’s children start school so early and almost all come from former or current commonwealth countries, as the British influence spread. Since that date we have steadily increased the school leaving age, so that more children have a wider range of
opportunities to support them into work. This begs the question why has no one looked at the other end, the starting point? Why are our children starting so young, with what is, after all, the legacy of Victorian decision-making based on an emerging need for safeguarding?

Some would argue that the earlier they start, the better; it gives parents more opportunity to work and there may have been some merit in the economic argument in the past, but now that most working parents in England are entitled to 30 hours funded childcare from three years of age, this is somewhat outdated. There is no evidence to support that starting school earlier improves educational outcomes; if it were true the UK would have one of the highest performing education systems in the world. According to the PISA\textsuperscript{1} results published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD) in 2016, we are currently ranked in 15\textsuperscript{th} place for Science, 26\textsuperscript{th} place for Maths and 23\textsuperscript{rd} place for Reading. Of course, there are many other factors at play as to why our children are not doing as well as they could be, but it is clear to see that them being there earlier is not giving them any advantage.

Why does this matter? It matters because we now have a clear understanding of how children develop and learn that we perhaps were not so clear about in the Victorian age, and that the systems, culture, pedagogy and practice that are commonplace in schools do not always support the developmental needs of children nor do they enable their learning. You could argue that the building is not the important factor, but what happens inside and the culture ethos and vision that the school holds around early education, and, indeed, there are examples of good practice.

However, this is not the norm and it is not uncommon to see reception aged children in school sitting for long periods of time on the carpet or at tables doing their ‘work’ and made to complete tasks for which they are not developmentally ready, inhibiting their development and preventing them from learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is built on the characteristics of effective learning, playing and exploring, active thinking and creating and thinking critically. If you think about it this is how we all learn isn’t it? Think learning to drive, or baking a cake or learning to sail, you learn by doing not by sitting and watching, or by cutting out and labelling pictures.

The increasing pressure schools feel under to improve their results is resulting in a top down approach whereby children are required to sit still, hold pencils and complete a range of, often inappropriate, adult-initiated tasks in order that they are better prepared for Key Stage One. Indeed, the new baseline that is being developed, has conceded that learning in Reception classes needs to be more in line with Key Stage One, because a significant number of children are still not meeting the early learning goals, which are deemed to be the benchmark for school readiness and the national curriculum. No one appears to be asking the question why this is the case, nor are they considering the possibility that it is the Key Stage One curriculum that needs to be brought in line with the EYFS, so that more children can develop at their own pace and succeed.

Of course, many schools do value play-based learning, but they are increasingly torn by the real challenge and pressure to improve results, so they make every effort to get children ready for the demands in Key Stage One in the hope that this will improve results. This is a flawed approach,
as we know that, to learn, children need to have their needs met and that means ensuring their physical and developmental needs are met too.

Physical development is a prime area of the EYFS, that means it is as important as communication and language and personal, social and emotional development. The three prime areas are the building blocks for learning, yet too often the physical needs of the growing child are overlooked, or take a lower priority.

Children need to move, they are programmed to do so, it is an innate need and they know it is good for them. Watch any small child who is awake and well and they will be moving all the time. They do it because they are exploring their bodies and learning to be in their surroundings. They are growing so fast that this is a constantly changing relationship, things they couldn’t reach before are suddenly easy to get; skills they were unable to complete become manageable, every day they need to reprogramme their internal body map and develop their sense of personal space. They move to develop a control of their bodies and to learn to refine their movements and this takes lots of practice, but, most importantly, they move to learn. Connell and McCarthy state “all learning begins with the body” and explain the link between the development of ‘muscle memory’ in the brain to that of cognitive brain development. They argue that moving develops the predicting and sequencing skills necessary for all learning.

It makes no sense to have small wriggly children sitting still why we teach them something, they are so focused on trying to be still, which is unnatural and uncomfortable, that they cannot take in the information anyway. This sitting still to learn approach is preventing our children from learning, and makes sense even for adults as, when we are physically uncomfortable, all our energy focuses on that and it is extremely difficult to take in and retain information.

Some would argue that they need to learn to be still and this is an important skill for the future. This is obviously correct, but you don’t learn to develop and grow, it is a sequence. You don’t put a young baby in a chair to teach them to sit up, or give them a teething ring to teach them to have teeth. Development and growth is sequential
and children need time, space and opportunities to practise developing at their own pace. This is highly applicable when it comes to writing; if children haven't mastered the gross motor skills and the wide pivotal movements from their shoulders they will struggle to hold pencils and other small writing implements. Simply sitting them down to practise holding a pencil is like asking a baby to hold a spoon in a hope they might feed themselves; they will eventually, but no quicker that they would have done had the skill been encouraged at the right time.

Moving is so integral to healthy development it impacts on children's social and emotional development too. Young children are often seen to be bonding around movement, running, jumping and chasing each other. This fires off synapses in the brain that aid learning and social development, boisterous play encourages children to relate to each other and learn about physical boundaries.

So, the answer to the challenge in how to improve outcomes for children could lie in the need for children to move. It’s time to have a radical rethink of our Reception classrooms, a root and branch assessment of culture, expectations, staffing, environment and planning. It is still possible to teach and to ensure children are fully engaged learners without restricting them physically, it just requires some imagination and fresh thinking as well as the courage to stand up for what is right for children.

The environment needs to be enabling, fewer tables and chairs and more space to spread out, a good outdoor learning space that encourages movement, spaces to run climb, sit and even roll around. All these movements help children to develop control over their bodies and the sooner they do that the better they will be able to sit still, eventually!
Top Tips for promoting physical development

- Think whole body planning – phonics, maths, writing, stories and most other learning can all be done through moving around
- Plan your classroom so that children have spaces to work on the floor without other children walking through
- Ensure planned tasks are child-centred and built on children’s interests – that way they are more likely to engage and learn
- Ensure the outdoor environment has a variety of surfaces, textures and levels for children to use
- Provide lots of opportunity for children to move and carry things around
- Get outside as much as you can – plan for as much learning to be done outside as possible
- Provide lots of vertical surfaces for children to draw paint, chalk and write on
- Think ‘does this have to be done at a table?’
- Support children to manage their own risks – risk averse adults often inhibit movement and play
- Join in and play with the children
- If children must sit still for some reason, make sure it is for short periods of time and try and build in some movement time – e.g. actions songs in assembly

More information

Who’s Running the Country?
By Kerrie Sharron

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How can we effectively prepare children and young people today for future lives in a changing world that is inherently unknowable to us? Asks Stephan Burkey.
ECD International Futures Programme (OECD 2016a) unsurprisingly concludes that young peoples’ daily lives as adults will be “radically different” compared to today.

The OECD predicts that the world economy, society, governance, technology (OECD 2016), and employment (ESPAS 2016:13) will be subject to “major transitions” in the future. However, the OECD concludes that it is impossible to accurately predict what these ‘transitions’ will be or their impact on the future lives of children and young people.

The World Economic Forum concludes that “in many industries and countries, the most in-demand occupations or specialties did not exist 10 or even five years ago, and the pace of change is set to accelerate. By one popular estimate, 65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in… […] job types that don’t yet exist” (WEF 2016).

In his 2006 ‘TED Talk’, Sir Ken Robinson observes that children; “starting school this year will be retiring in 2065. Nobody has a clue […] what the world will look like in five years’ time. And yet we’re meant to be educating them for it. So the unpredictability, I think, is extraordinary.” (Robinson, 2006).

The traditional response of policy makers to emergent challenge tends to be two-fold: (i) structural or systemic change; and/or, (2) short-term policy goals (Ilott et al., 2016 with Norris and Adam, 2017). These responses are understandable in the context of the UK political cycle that “naturally tends towards short-term activity” (Ilott et al., 2016:8) and the reality of education policy makers having a limited number of ‘levers’ to achieve change (Parliament. House of Commons, 2010, p.4).

Ilott et al. (2016) and the National College for Teaching & Leadership (undated) remind us that many of the recent structural changes to education in England and Wales (including, but not limited to, the content and delivery of the National Curriculum, and professional standards for teachers) were often short-to-medium term solutions to long-term challenges.

If we were to attempt to design an education system that would preempt the challenges of the future, the only resource available to us is our understanding of ‘now’, projected forward. History demonstrates that this resource will always be insufficient for the task: even the best-informed projection will be wrong, to a greater or lesser degree.

For example, in 1964, the writer Arthur C. Clarke predicted with alarming accuracy the online world of 2014, and changes to employment. However, Clark also predicted with equal confidence the universal delegation of manual work to trained chimpanzees (Middleton, 2013).

So, what is the alternative to attempting to build a ‘future-proofed’ educational system that will fail to accurately predict real-world change?

The best evidence we have suggests that the most effective support that we can give to young people to meet the challenges of tomorrow is to embed pedagogies and practice that could be described as ‘future-aware’.

‘Future-aware’ pedagogies support young people to develop the mindset, capacities and characteristics required to meet new challenges as they arise, and on their own terms.

In the following section, I suggest effective responses to the challenge of developing ‘future-aware’ pedagogies.
Future-Aware

A survey of key research literature provides a coherent and common ‘spine’ of key future-aware skills and capacities that young people will require in their adult lives:

1. Effective collaboration
2. Being able to reflect on and extend knowledge
3. Self-regulation and self-development
4. Research and problem solving skills
5. Effective use of technology
6. Communication
7. Creativity and innovation
8. Metacognition
9. Grit and resilience

There is a need to build the core strength of every child or young person. Core strength, defined as a ‘future-aware’ concept is “the confidence and ability to learn, develop and participate in society” (Achievement for All 2017). To do this, a three-step approach, based on evidence, is proposed:

Step One: Every Child Included

Children and young people are supported to identify themselves in terms of:

- Aspiration, ‘I can’
- Access, ‘I do’
- Attainment, ‘I have’
- Achievement, ‘I am’

This self-aware and reflective identification equips children and young people to develop grit and resilience – they know they can achieve – and develops self-regulation and self-development – they know they can achieve more.
Step Two: Building the Foundations

Children and young people are supported to develop ‘future-aware’ skills and capacities, through:

- Inclusive school or setting leadership that meets the needs of children and young people.
- High-quality teaching and learning that closes the attainment gap and drives attainment and achievement.
- Wider outcomes and opportunities that develop children and young people’s engagement, positive behaviours, well-being, self-awareness, independence and self-efficacy.
- Game-changing engagement of parents and carers to embed aspiration, grit and resilience, motivation and self-development in the wider lives of children and young people.

Step Three: The development of teams of significant adults and services that support all children and young people.

AFA develops professionals at all levels through mutually ‘owned’ learning and support that deepens professional knowledge, capacity and confidence.

Taken together, these three steps are a model that makes real change to support all children and young people to improve their future-aware skills, future life chances, and future social mobility.

Some examples of Future-Aware Pedagogies and Practice

Future-aware pedagogies and practices are most effective when they are woven through the curriculum (formal and informal). This section presents capsule
summaries of some key future-aware pedagogies and practices that schools and settings can explore.

**The GROW Model**

GROW stands for: Goal; Reality; Options; Will (or Way Forward). The GROW model is used to identify pedagogical challenges and solutions. The approach is well-suited to developing future-aware skills and capacities as it allows schools and settings to identify innovative approaches to building skills and capacities that cut across curriculum boundaries (such as research skills, grit and resilience, self-regulation, and communication).

**Developing metacognition**

Metacognition is a key future-aware skill and capacity, and is defined by Holton and Clarke (2006) as “awareness of own learning processes and knowledge”. Developing metacognitive skills is a key component of developing the core strength of all children and young people (including the very youngest).

**Applied learning**

Learning should be set within practical situations to improve understanding of how theory works in practice; this is called applied learning. Applied learning is education put to practical use: learning is experiential, contextualised to real situations, and personalised to the learners’ needs.

In conversation with the author, Dr Tanya Ovenden-Hope (author of *Understanding Applied Learning: Developing Effective Practice to Support All Learners*) observes that applied learning is ‘future-aware’ when it is:

“‘REAL’ - Relevant, Engaged, Active Learning - it then becomes a powerful tool to develop independent learners, who are equipped to understand their own knowledge and to be active partners in the development of their on-going learning.”

Applied learning provides an opportunity for teachers to facilitate increasing levels of responsibility, choice and autonomy for children and young people; providing a pedagogical framework to support the learning journey from child to adult. Applied learning develops in children and young people real-life relevant skills and capacities that equip them to successfully address their future learning needs and increase their employability.

**Double loop learning**

‘Double-loop learning’ is a strategy where teachers and young people work together to develop teaching and learning. The concept originated in the work of Argyris and Schön (1978).

Traditional approaches to problem solving typically involve applying a succession of established approaches to a problem or learning task until a ‘best fit’ solution is found, which (it is hoped) can then be applied to similar problems in the future. This approach is ‘single-loop learning’ and is based on the presumption that there are immovable contexts that the learner is operating within.

By contrast, ‘double-loop learning’ encourages learners to question their basic assumptions and the contexts of their learning, and then to ‘loop’ this reflection back into the construction of their responses to new problem or tasks.

Double-loop learning needs to be highly future-aware as it empowers children and young people to consider concepts beyond curriculum silos and to engage their wider knowledge within specific tasks. The transfer of concepts from one field to another supports the development of creative, reflective, and self-directed skillsets.
Technology
It seems appropriate to conclude these brief summaries with a mention of technology. As discussed earlier, it is almost impossible to accurately predict the future role and nature of technology. It is sobering to consider that ten years ago we had yet to encounter iPads (launched in 2010), Android mobile phones (2007), 4G wireless (2010) or Instagram (2010).

This poses the question: how do we prepare children and young people for lives with future technology using current technology that will seem laughably primitive in only a few decades?

The answer is: We can’t. But what we can do, is avoid the temptation to focus on the technology and instead focus on “practices and activities that surround them” (Selwyn, 2016).

In conversation with the author, Nicole Ponsford (co-author of TechnoTeaching: Taking Practice to The Next Level in the Digital Age, co-Founder of TechnoTeachers, and Achievement for All Achievement Coach) observed that:

“Technology alone won’t improve the future outcomes of children and young people. Yes, we need to develop the relevant technology skills and support them with industry-standard resources, but we also need to encourage them to have a positive and open mindset that will meet the challenges and changes of the 22nd Century. It is by integrating these three elements that we help prepare them for their futures. Developing enquiringly and ‘can do – will do’ mindsets to technology and all possible outcomes is the key.”

We need to look to the future by building the core strength of every child and young person to equip them with the future-aware ‘can do – will do’ metacognitive, creative, and self-development skills and capacities they will need in the future to make full use of the possibilities of technology; schools and other educational settings working with Achievement for All, comment on the value added to this through the online Bubble.

Conclusion
We cannot predict the future that children and young people will live within. We can, however, be future-aware in our pedagogy and practice.
We are future-aware when our teaching and engagements with children and young people develop the resilience, resources, skills, and capacities they will need to overcome future challenges and live happy and stable future lives. In essence, there should be a focus in schools and settings on building the core strength of every child and young person and in deploying effective pedagogies and practices that support children and young people to meet the challenges of an unknowable future.

(Schools, early years settings, colleges and other educational settings can explore the key future-aware pedagogies and practices outlined in this article through Achievement for All [https://afaeducation.org/])

Stefan Burkey is a freelance education researcher, writer, and evaluator. He has worked for the Department for Education, along with a number of UK universities and charities in the UK, USA, and India.

References

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Shropshire, Barnsley, Buckinghamshire, Sandwell, Dudley and Hereford & Worcester are just a few who have purchased SALLEY for their schools.
Amy Husband is the head teacher of Clifford Bridge Academy. Here she gives a personal view on what it means to be an inclusive school.

Let me start with an example,’ she says. ‘Max*, one of our KS2 boys was recently diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. His class teacher immediately made appropriate changes to ensure he made progress and achieved. His co-ordination was such that he struggled to write in a clear format for long pieces of written text. Amongst other strategies, his class teacher gave him access to a laptop and showed him how to use it effectively. As a result, he has gained
significantly in confidence. His teacher realised that the ideas for his writing were there in his head, but he was just struggling to get them down on paper because the process of manipulating a pencil was a real barrier. Once Max began routinely getting his thoughts out via a keyboard instead of a pencil, his writing, and more importantly his confidence, went from strength to strength. This simple tweak to Max’s provision, along with many other bespoke strategies my staff have employed, is just an example of the solution-focused attitude that our school has. The impact of this approach on children’s day-to-day life in school is probably best reflected in a letter that Max’s mum recently wrote to me. She said:

“Working in education myself I know what a busy and demanding area of work it can be, but to feel that the school and Max’s teacher are able to supply him with such a needs-led primary education I am extremely grateful for. His confidence at school improves every day and as a mum, which I know you can appreciate, the fact that he enjoys coming into school, has friends, is comfortable, learns and has fun means everything to me.”

"Together we achieve. Individually we grow," underpins everything at Clifford Bridge Academy. Part of the Inspire Multi-Academy Trust, Clifford Bridge works closely with three other primary schools within the Trust. There is a rigorous approach to reading, writing and maths and children follow a thematic curriculum. The inclusive and fair-to-all culture across the academy enables all staff to focus more effectively on children’s academic and social development. Rated good by Ofsted at its last inspection in 2013, it has 414 pupils on roll, 13% have Special Educational Needs and 7% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years. Overall, performance of pupils in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2 is above the national average and Clifford Bridge has recently been celebrated as being in the Top Five Performing Schools in Coventry, with 77% of children achieving expected standards in Reading, Writing and Maths combined. Situated in Binley,
a suburb in the east of Coventry and a former mining community, Clifford Bridge became an academy in August 2015. Through a child-centred focus, we have become a more inclusive school.

**Leadership and Management**

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has a very high profile across the school; it is always on the agenda. We are a leadership team of six. Two of us have the National Award for SEN Coordination (Masters Level) and all of us routinely access professional development courses which ensure our own knowledge and practice is up-to-date. Being creative, flexible and 100% child-focused certainly sets the tone of my leadership team; they never come to the table with an attitude of defeat, our conversations invariably get very animated as we discuss the issues raised and come up with a solution together, that has the child at the centre of it. We have a distributed leadership model, where hierarchy has little relevance. For any agenda item, from whole school improvement right through to an individual pupil’s needs, our start point is always “Who is the best person for this job? Who has the relationship with the child?” The team around me, right from Kim Docking (Executive Principal at Inspire Education Trust) through to the staff in classrooms, are role-models of our child-centred approach. Every decision and solution is unequivocally about the little people at the centre of it.

Across the school, but particularly amongst the leadership team, we model the type of behaviour, actions and approaches that we expect. Last year, we had one particular class where there were around six children with exceptionally complex needs. I would go into the class and model what I expected and my assistant heads would do the same. Sometimes, where the needs of children are evident in their
challenging behaviour, this can be really stressful for the staff dealing with it day-to-day. Nobody’s intention is to make a situation worse, but sometimes this happens if staff aren’t confident in de-escalating a child’s behaviour or spotting what the triggers for that behaviour were. We have done a lot of professional development work on this in the last academic year, particularly in relation to Autism, attachment disorders and children’s mental health. The whole team at Clifford have come a long way in understanding these things and making sure we are acting and reacting to behaviours in a way that gets us the kindest and most effective outcomes. My leadership team and I also did a lot of modelling at less formal times of the day, such as break and lunchtimes. We would be out playing and engaging with the children, so that we were modelling our expectations to every member of the team, and to other children, about how we expect our children with SEND to be treated. We always have an honest and professional dialogue afterwards so that we can learn from each other and promote the very best outcomes for our children.

Parent and carer engagement

We have always had very supportive parents in the school and parental engagement with their children's learning is very good. As a result, we don't face the same level of barriers that other schools may face. Our relationships with parents and carers are developed by the whole team; we consider their engagement to be crucial. Often we make it as informal as possible, so that it feels natural and not forced. For parents who perhaps don't want to come in or feel nervous about being in school, we try to have a 'cup of tea culture'. This way, it feels a little more familiar and welcoming and we can get to know them. Over time, they then start to feel increasingly comfortable with our staff and our setting, and they feel able engage more with their child's learning, and with school life. The vast majority of our parent and carer community are incredibly supportive and enjoy attending our many events. In terms of home-school partnership and communication, staff use the language and approaches within Achievement for All, with that same level of passion and belief that I hold.

Wider outcomes and opportunities

Extra-curricular activities are a huge part of life at Clifford Bridge. We offer an incredibly wide range of sport, music and drama opportunities. In addition, many of our children attend music, sports or dance lessons outside of school. We have 414 pupils, with relatively few pupil premium pupils; this means we have to be careful that pupil premium pupils do not feel isolated. If pupil premium pupils want to attend extra-curricular activities which they might not be able to afford, we will pay for it. Participation and inclusion is non-negotiable, every single child in this building has the right to participate in the enriching and exciting opportunities we have on offer, so, if finance is a genuine barrier, then there is an obvious solution. As a result of low pupil premium numbers, Clifford Bridge has a very tight budget, but it's like anything else in life, you pick your priorities and you hold them dear. Our culture, our ethos and our every move are about inclusion and achievement for all, so our spending of our limited funding reflects this.

We had one boy, who is now in secondary school, who won the termly Head Teacher Award. When he was much younger, he expressed an interest in music and really had a flair for it. He wanted to learn to play the guitar, so we taught him! Through a series of individual lessons, group lessons, School Band involvement and even gigs at local concerts, by the time he left us at the end of Year 6 he was an incredible guitarist who had never had a lesson outside of school. When he was nominated for the Head Teacher Award at the end of Year 6, we chose not to spend the budget on a trophy, and instead surprised him with an electric guitar! He and his family were so grateful and appreciative, and we’ve since heard that, upon joining his
secondary school, he is now an active member of their school band, and continues to enjoy his guitar. Our early actions and encouragement with this particular pupil had a knock-on effect on his engagement in school-life and in his learning. We always try to find something that sparks a child’s interest, and create a bespoke provision and experience to keep that spark alive.

We also carry this philosophy into provision for larger groups of children. For example, we have 60 children in one particular year group, with eight of them having a complex degree of need, such as autism or sensory processing needs. We introduced yoga into our PE curriculum, specifically with the purpose of improving mental well-being in this year group. We invested a lot into training our staff in meditation and mindfulness techniques which now underpin all of our learning experiences in this cohort; we turned PE on its head! The children enjoy it so much. For children with physical disabilities and learning difficulties, we try to think ‘outside the box’ and creatively adapt our curriculum to put the children, and their needs, at the centre of it.

In summary

When visitors come and look around our school, there is often one bit of feedback that is repeated time and time again; how everything at Clifford Bridge Academy is “all about the children”. In fact, we’ve now heard this so many times that we’ve turned it into a huge display of photographs with that slogan right in the middle of it! We really do think of each and every child in our school not just as a ‘learner’, but also as a little citizen of the world who we have been tasked with the responsibility of shaping. Along with our incredibly supportive parents, our Governing Body and the wider structure of the Multi-Academy Trust, we all endeavour to do everything in our power to ensure that every child achieves their potential and has the best possible primary education, filled with awe, wonder and FUN!
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Many of the symptoms boys with autism present are missing or masked in girls. As a result they go undiagnosed and unsupported, Carol Povey reports.

Statistics show a higher diagnosis of autism in boys than girls, with data in the UK showing a ratio of 4:1 (Ambitious About Autism, 2017). However, as available statistics are generally based on multiple studies, both national and international, this ratio is likely to be lower. Recent research in the USA suggests a ratio of 3:1 (Loomes et al., 2017). Rachel Loomes and her colleagues, in their systematic review of male to female ratios in autism suggest that girls who meet the autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) criteria are at a greater risk than boys of not receiving a clinical diagnosis. Rivet (2011) on the other hand, suggests that boys may be more
likely to show hyperactivity or aggression than girls, which would lead to a clinical examination. Other researchers suggest that autism may present differently in girls or girls may 'camouflage' symptoms (Dworzynski et al., 2012). What the research highlights is that autism in girls is probably more common than was previously thought and that girls on the autism spectrum may present with different or less pronounced symptoms or may mask the symptoms. In many situations it may not lead to a clinical diagnosis.

Carol Povey, Director of the National Autistic Society, believes this was the case, but says that “people’s awareness is now growing. Clinical referrals to specialist diagnosis centres such as our Lorna Wing Centre for Autism have seen a steady increase in the number of girls and women referred.”

“We are also getting more and more women coming to us with misdiagnosis in childhood. They had been diagnosed with ‘something’ in childhood and felt, as they got older, that it may be something different. In school, it is often picked up because a teacher may see a girl struggling. She may be bright, but she is still getting it wrong. She may have no friends - often because of underlying autism. But she may be good at camouflaging. Our specialist psychologists - Dr. Judith Gould and Dr. Sarah Lister Brooke - see the increase. We now recognise a whole group of girls in this category.”

The National Autistic Society (2017) describes autism as “a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them.” Given this definition, it is perhaps not surprising that much of our knowledge on autism is informed by research within schools. In this environment, children on the autism spectrum have to face the daily challenge of social interaction with peers. Evidence shows that boys on the autism spectrum are more likely to play on their own than with the group and often have special interests which are different to those of other boys their age (e.g. train
Teachers are more likely to identify a special educational need with boys as they are often hyperactive and have a poor attention span in class. Girls, on the other hand, may equally have exaggerated interests, but these may be similar to other girls, e.g. animals or soap operas, but not being unusual, they are not considered symptomatic of ASD. Earlier research suggested that girls, who generally interact in smaller peer groups than boys, may be better at mimicking the socialising skills of their peers than boys (Attwood, 2006).

Carol Povey says, “with very young girls, they usually pick up language quicker than boys. If they are slower, teachers and practitioners can pick it up. Children on the autism spectrum may have very focused interests- e.g. boys focus on planets, whereas girls focus on animals. But a lot of children are like this. So, it is not always easy to pick up when children are younger. As we know from the research by Gould and Ashton-Smith (2012), it is not the particular hobbies that set them apart from their peers, but the quality and intensity of these interests and the length of time spent on these’ that set them apart from others.

“And teachers do pick up ASD in girls, but it is often later. In later years, they pick up the secondary symptoms, for example, eating disorders or self-harming. These secondary symptoms are more evident.”

Equally, in pre-school settings, it will often be an experienced early years teacher who will notice that this child is responding just that little bit differently.

In a recent study, Dean et al. (2017) considered the extent to which gender-related
Social activities help girls to mask their symptoms more than boys and if the symptoms of ASD are easier to identify in boys. They concluded that symptoms in both boys and girls are similar, but boys are more likely to externalise behaviours than girls; they are thus more likely to have a clinical diagnosis. The particular way children interact in the playground, where boys are more likely to play sport in larger groups and girls tend to have smaller peer group activity, also enables girls to better mask symptoms. Girls with ASD may not have the necessary social skills to interact meaningfully with their peers, but often remain physically within the group.

However, as Carol Povey points out, girls can show challenging behaviours in their interaction with others. She says “teachers need to think—’is she just being naughty or difficult? Or could it be her way of dealing with a difficult situation? The girl may often have what appears to be a temper tantrum. She may be very intelligent. But the temper tantrum may be a meltdown because she has an overload of information’. And, as Carol Povey adds, ‘in the context of managing their personal emotional resources, girls can over exhaust themselves.’

In schools, once a diagnosis has been made, there are number of ways teachers can support them. “Teachers can use social stories to help girls understand their social surroundings,” says Povey, “simple strategies, clear timetables and some work around self-esteem because they don’t understand some of the nuances around relationships. For older girls, they will do a lot of work around communication and how to understand themselves. Girls on the autism spectrum often say what people will want them to say.”

But for girls (and boys) with ASD, “parents and carers are so important,” says Povey. “Good links and consistency are key in the relationship between parents and teachers. Parents need to know how to support these girls to be more confident. Girls on the autism spectrum need to know what is expected of them in everything at all times. For parents and carers it is recognizing this in their daughter. Of course, this differs with every family, and every family needs to go on their own journey. And sometimes dad’s struggle more than mums. Although we have more understanding of the needs of these girls, we need more research. So, for teacher, the important thing is to be willing and able to ask ‘could this be autism?’

### References

Olympic and Paralympic Values
What Have They Ever Done For Us?

As an antidote to an increasingly narrow curriculum, Park House School in Newbury adopted the Olympian values of the Get Set programme for its extra - curricular learning. It has transformed the outlook of the pupils towards those less fortunate than they are, explains Derek Peaple.

Readers of a certain age - or with a particular taste in comedy - will almost certainly remember an iconic scene from the 1979 Monty Python Film, 'The Life of Brian'. In it, members of The People's Front of Judea debate what "benefits" their Roman oppressors have brought them, ironically concluding, "All right - but apart from the sanitation... the medicine... education... wine... public order... Irrigation... the roads... The fresh water system... And public health, what have the Romans ever done for us?" It's with an equal sense of irony that I therefore now pose a similarly phrased question to shape reflections on the impact of distinctive
extra-curricular programmes at Park House School in Newbury; a programme that is both based on - and aims to amplify - the Olympic and Paralympic values of Excellence, Inspiration, Courage, Determination, Friendship, Respect and Equality.

So, what indeed has this approach to extra curricular provision ever done for us - specifically in relation to curriculum enrichment, students’ social, moral, cultural and leadership development and the provision of an international dimension to their learning.

That wider impact on learning – and students’ enjoyment of learning – surely couldn’t be more significant in 2018. The recent narrowing of an increasingly content-driven curriculum and examination system has further heightened the importance of providing opportunities for our young people to develop as fully-rounded individuals, engaged with their wider community and equipped with skills such as creativity and curiosity, recently identified by the World Economic Forum as being crucial for their future employability.

Planning Provision

2010-11 saw the convergence of two factors which were critical in shaping our values-themed approach to extra-curricular provision at Park House. First, our decision to be one of the first schools nationally to adopt Get Set, the official London 2012 education programme, with its focus on thematic and cross-curricular learning based on the Olympic and Paralympic values. And, second, the management of our Academy conversion process and related need to both communicate our vision for the benefits of the new status and formulate an action plan for specific projects and activities that would offer wider opportunities and deliver further school improvement.

Our first step was to publish a clear statement to stakeholders explaining, in terms of each of the values, the connection between what had already made us successful as a community school and our future aspirations as an Academy. This values framework subsequently provided the basis for whole staff planning sessions, where teaching and support staff worked together in multi-disciplinary groups to discuss and develop specific projects or activities that could be ‘badged’ in relation to one or more of the values. These highly creative sessions yielded a range of innovative ideas which were then reviewed by SLT to produce a consolidated programme of values-related initiatives. In this context, our Ofsted Report of June 2012 concluded that, “a values-centred ambition for students inspired by the Headteacher and governing body drives the school’s effective improvement and its planning.”

Structurally, a further series of decisions were made alongside these planning sessions to determine how activities could be most effectively delivered. In addition to continuing the traditional approach of ad hoc after school provision, a new
Enrichment programme was introduced on Monday afternoons. This was a weekly elective session, where students could additionally opt into a wide variety of clubs run by external coaches, support staff and external providers whilst teaching staff undertook ongoing professional development and planning together in department or cross-curricular teams.

Extra-Curricular Innovation and Enrichment

As a 'mature' Sports College with accreditation stretching back to 1998, we had already - and regularly - used Olympic-triggered opportunities to enhance learning prior to London 2012: a 2008 Beijing-inspired Chinese theme week, for example, was indicative of the sort of approach that we had previously adopted. However, engagement with the Values-based Get Set programme from 2010 onwards provided this work with a new, more structured and far sharper focus. This was reflected in planning for extra-curricular enrichment, both within individual subject areas and thematically across the curriculum, with the latter also contributing significantly to innovative university and international partnerships.

Within individual subject areas, Art has provided perhaps the most visually stimulating example of extra-curricular enrichment. This involved a Key 3 Stage 3 Art Club project in which students identified iconic moments from Olympic or Paralympic history that they then interpreted in a particular genre, following further research into both the event and techniques of their chosen artist. This has given rise to an impressive 'Legacy Gallery' of more than twenty works, exhibited across the site and also turned into greeting cards used when writing to students or staff to commend them for outstanding effort. Figure 1. below provides two examples from the Gallery: a Munch-inspired interpretation of Sebastian Coe’s 1980 Moscow 1500m Gold winning ‘Scream’ and a Hokusai Ben Ainslie, appropriately celebrating his victory in the 2008 Finn Class victory in Beijing on the crest of a stylised ‘Wave’!

Figure 1. Examples of the ‘Legacy Gallery’
More thematically, Debating has formed a key element of our approach. Following a successful entry to the national ‘Debating Matters’ for Sixth Form students, a Debating Club was established at lunchtimes and during the Monday afternoon Enrichment session for students from all year groups. Sixth Formers act as mentors and work to prepare and present debates in vertical groups with younger students, also chairing and judging competitions (Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Student-led Debating Competitions

These debates have focused on values-related issues such as equal opportunities and the ethics of the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sport. The latter recently offered the opportunity to work with the UK Anti-Doping Agency as part of their 2017 Spirit of Sport Clean Sport Week, hosting a series of debates around the wider importance of fair play, values in sport and life choices.
Figure 3: Working with the UK Anti-Doping Agency
Extra-curricular debating has, therefore, also provided an important context to develop many of the core skills which the World Economic Forum identifies for future employability, amongst them critical thinking, mental agility, curiosity and oral communication and presentation. Others have included regular out of hours internal competitions and challenges that draw on learning from across and beyond the curriculum. An activity which requires students to work in a team to put together a bid to host the Olympics and Paralympic Games, for example, or the following, inspired by themed opening ceremonies at major events:

Figure 4: 2012 Opening Ceremony Challenge Legacy Challenge

Partnership working and community engagement

Finally, the Olympic and Paralympic values have also provided a focus for extra-curricular partnership working in a variety of contexts, adding value and a further layer of opportunities for students to develop and apply their skills and learning.

In this context, students are actively encouraged to identify and support the work of a range of local, national and international charities. Perhaps the most innovative work of this type arose from our participation in TeenTech – a national competition which encourages students to develop and present creative uses of new technology to address social issues and improve lives. Preparation for TeenTech has formed an important stand in creative approaches to extra-curricular ICT and Computing provision since the competition's inception four years ago, and, in 2015, a team of three Year 10 students won the national award based on their idea for an app-based water purification system.
However, the students further extended their thinking beyond the hypothetical challenges associated with the competition and, in conjunction with a charity, established the eWATERPAY system, taking the app out to The Gambia the following summer, making a real difference to real lives.
An international dimension to extra-curricular partnership-working therefore represents a penultimate strand of our Values-themed provision. Much of this revolves around the opportunities arising from school to school communication, inspired by the ‘universal language’ provided by these Values. For example, with Sithengile High School in Durban, we have developed the concept of a ‘Values Passport’ where students debated, in their differing contexts, what might be deserving of a ‘stamp’ in relation to appropriate behaviours, attitudes and actions. With our BBC World Olympic Dreams’ partnership with School No.79 in Mongolia, the Values also offered a framework for a series of shared assemblies, with students in both schools preparing videoed assembly presentations that could be subsequently discussed through their respective tutorial programmes. Further feedback then followed through a series of themed Skype conversations on each of the identified values.

Most recently, we have extended this approach to the establishment of a new range of partnerships with primary and secondary schools in the lead up to the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo. This has begun with a cross-phase group of students from Years 8-11 – our ‘Tokyo 2020 Ambassadors’ – producing a video on the impact of Values-themed learning designed to be shared with our emerging Japanese partner schools and a themed transition day with our local primary partners. Most importantly, we wanted to introduce a new enrichment activity for our students that would give them the opportunity to develop an appreciation of both the language and culture of Japan. With the support of the Japan Foundation our Year 9 students began a programme of language learning in Monday afternoon Enrichment sessions designed to enable them to cascade their knowledge to primary pupils, and lead creative activities inspired by the forthcoming 2020 Games (Figure 7.)
Lastly, the Olympic and Paralympic values also provided an applied context for the development of a creative extra- and cross-curricular University partnership. The ‘Orielympics’- so-called because of a Widening Access Outreach partnership with Oriel College, Oxford University - involves Year 9s in a two-day residential learning experience. The co-constructed programme involves College Tutors with History, Classics, Economics, Physical Science and Bio-Chemistry specialisms. College Tutors provide challenging initial stimulus lectures around a range of inter-disciplinary Olympic themes: ‘Sporting Heroes of the Ancient and Modern World’, ‘The Politics and Propaganda of the Games’ and ‘The Physics of Paralympic Performance’, for example - with students developing their own presentations in response and being offered the opportunity to take part in an Oxford Union-style debate – further building on our Enrichment offer - around the most contentious of the issues raised.

Conclusions

In the context of my introductory comments about the narrowing of a curriculum offer and assessment framework making extra-curricular provision all the more vital to young people’s experience of school and enjoyment of learning, I’m somewhat loath to leave the last words Ofsted! However, these observations from our 2012 and 2016 Reports respectively do both capture our intent and offer affirmation:

“The school’s commitment to recognising each student’s success is evident in all aspects of school life. Students are directly involved in a range of collaborative projects, including those with local primary school pupils, schools internationally and local, community-based projects…. These rich and memorable experiences promote students’ good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development”.

“Leaders have placed a high emphasis on the importance of developing pupils into fully rounded adults. The promotion of pupils’ social, spiritual, moral and cultural development is a real strength of the school. Many pupils engage in a wide range of clubs and activities”.

So, there is clearly very great value in values-themed activity; they do indeed do a great deal for us.

Derek Peaple is the headteacher at Park House School.
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Spelling Is Important

Engaging and motivating children to learn to spell - playing with words, using all your senses and the power of a spelling app can work wonders argues James Passmore.

The shoulders droop, the faces fall and the smiles evaporate. The look of disappointment and disinterest spreads around the room. As a teacher and a parent, every time I used to ask my class or my own children to practise their spellings I was met with grunts of disapproval and complete disengagement. I’m not talking about learning new spelling rules, exploring the origins and roots of words, figuring out the most appropriate word to use to engage the reader in the story you’re writing, or
identifying which is the most persuasive word to use in your letter about banning school uniform... all of these learning opportunities are highly engaging and can easily capture children's imagination. I'm talking about the weekly spelling test and the practice that accompanies it.

There is a lot of discussion online around whether learning to spell is important or not, and if it is how to do it effectively. Some educational reformists suggest that focusing on spelling holds back the creative processes of writing, suggesting spelling just comes naturally through regular reading. However, reading specialist Susan Jones, argues that "spelling can and should be an integral part of language instruction for every student" (1). "Learning to spell helps to cement the connection between the letters and their sounds, and learning high-frequency ‘sight-words’ to mastery level improves both reading and writing" (1). Spelling well is an essential life skill, even with computer spell checkers available (they cannot choose the correct word to use for you), and spelling is still assessed as part of KS2 SATs tests. “Literacy skills are interrelated, with reading, spelling and writing all influencing each other; if one aspect is neglected, then all suffer” (2). Clearly learning to spell is important, but some still argue that learning the rules and patterns through practising spelling is boring. “When students are practising in ways that are effective, and getting appropriate feedback and experiencing success, practice is not drudgery [...] often it can be satisfying and even enjoyable, especially when technology is used creatively so students can use their strengths within individualised lessons“ (1).

The question is how can we make learning and practising spelling ‘satisfying and enjoyable’? This article explores three strategies to engage and excite learners into wanting to practise and improve their spellings: playing with and understanding words; using all the senses to practise writing words and using the Spelling Whizz app to motivate and engage learners.

1. Playing with and understanding words to motivate learners

In his article in the TES in February 2017, Mitchell Hudson advocates a range of exploratory and practical strategies to help children to learn to spell (3). He argues that exploring the etymology of words can help pupils see the links between spellings. Knowing that ‘auto’ means ‘by itself’ will help children decode and spell words such as ‘autopilot’ and ‘automatic’. He points out that this knowledge can
be applied when pupils encounter new words, helping them to spell them, as well as providing them with opportunities to create inventive new words and devise definitions for them. Mitchell also believes that engaging practically with words can be helpful, suggesting children “perform contraction surgery,” writing two words to be contracted such as ‘did’ and ‘not’ on a piece of paper and physically cutting out the letters to be omitted (in this case, the ‘o’ in ‘not’) and using tape to reconnect them, then finally adding the apostrophe.

Exploring words to see if pupils can find smaller words within them and using mnemonics can help with spelling too. Remembering that there is ‘a rat’ in the word ‘separate,’ or thinking ‘I catch the bus to my business’ to help spell the word “business” can help (4). Knowing that necessary has ‘one collar and two sleeves,’ that ‘stationery has an ‘e’ for envelopes,’ or that you “hear with your ear” are all useful memory triggers for children to help them spell tricky words. ‘Knowing the history of English spelling and taking an interest in where words come from are two very important strategies. “[…] Plumber has a silent b in there because it comes from the Latin word ‘plumbum’ meaning lead piping used by plumbers […] knock, knee, gnaw, gnat are all Viking (Old Norse) words, the ‘k’ and ‘g’ were pronounced but not now” (5).

2. Using all the senses to engage learners

Early years and nursery settings will be very familiar with the strategy of using all the senses to engage learners, but this can and should be extended up throughout the school. Imagine you have a carefully selected set of spellings to learn. The traditional approach would be to sit down and practise writing them using pen and paper lots of times until you had remembered them – not necessarily very ‘satisfying and enjoyable’. What if instead, you asked learners to take each of their spellings and paint them in giant letters on the fence or playground with paintbrushes (use water if the idea of using paint is bringing you out in a rash!) or marker pens or chalk on big pieces of paper? Children could use their fingers to trace out the words in sand trays, or use mini-whiteboards, scrabble pieces or foam letters (a great home learning in
the bath task). How about visually representing each letter in a word with children forming the letters with their bodies in groups? Perhaps you could ask them to use cameras or audio recorders to film themselves chanting the letters or sounds in their words, or explaining memory tricks they have learnt for specific spellings. Maybe children could use alphabet spaghetti to practise writing their target spellings and then eat the ones they get right. Use scented markers and different colours for different parts of tricky to remember words.

3. Using a spelling app to motivate and engage learners

Children today are confident technology users and are often referred to as ‘digital natives’ which describes a person who has grown up in the digital age, rather than acquiring familiarity with digital systems as an adult (6). Children are unafraid to ‘click a button’ and try things out, and with devices now more prolific and increasingly intuitive to use, it has never been a better time for children to use technology to support and challenge them in their learning.

In 2011, the Internet security company AVG carried out a year-long piece of research called Digital Diaries. They looked at the changing nature of childhood for 2-5 year olds. In particular, AVG wanted to find out to what extent very young children are now learning ‘tech’ skills faster than so-called life ones. They found that 58% of children aged 2-5 know how to play a ‘basic’ computer game, more could open a web browser (25%) than could swim unaided (20%), and twice as many could play with a smartphone application as could tie their shoelaces (7). With the increasing proliferation of smartphones, and children having their own devices at younger and younger ages, it is very likely that these percentages will have increased over the last few years. The question for us as parents and educators, as well as ensuring young children continue to develop their essential life skills of course, is how do we tap into this engagement and motivation, and these digital skills to ensure children’s love of using technology can have a positive educational benefit?

In 2016, a group of teachers at Corsham Primary School, in Wiltshire, carried out a small-scale research project into the impact of using iPads to support the teaching and learning of basic skills in reading and maths. A range of educational apps were installed on the iPads and children took them home to support them with their home learning. They then brought the devices back into school and used them in groups to support their class-based learning. Teachers found that using technology had a positive impact on self-esteem, motivation, enjoyment and interest in learning. They discovered that using technology created stronger memory links which had a clear impact on learning, and found that the use of digital video to teach and reinforce key skills had a significant impact, particularly in maths. There was a positive impact on attainment, especially for girls in maths and boys in reading. For boys’ reading age attainment, the months gain in the intervention group was nearly double that of the control group (see graph). Whilst this was a small-scale trial, it is indicative of the power of using technology to support teaching and learning, increase engagement and improve outcomes.

I realised that the impact of using
technology could be applied to increasing engagement and improving outcomes in learning and practising spelling, and explored the AppStore to see what apps were available. Whilst there were a number of spelling apps on the market, through researching them more, I found that the quality and prices varied hugely, and several were too basic or gimmicky. Some had clearly not been designed and developed by educationalists and most required in-app purchases to access the whole app – not appropriate in schools where the user (the child) is not responsible for purchasing or installing. The key feature I was looking for and couldn’t find however, was the ability to create a list and then share it across multiple devices and for many pupils.

I decided to design and develop a new spelling app that would address the above concerns, and be simple to use and intuitive, engaging and motivating, and suitable for all primary ages (including children with special educational needs). Spelling Whizz app (8) is bright and colourful, comes with 90 built-in spelling lists (over 1000 words and audio) based on the national curriculum and has the functionality to enable teachers and parents to create and share their own bespoke spelling lists and audio quickly and easily. The app is educational and engaging, rather than just being a game with annoying in-app purchases. I based the spelling practice strategy on the tried and tested ‘look, say, cover, write, check’ method ‘which is multi-sensory and […] involves visual, auditory and kinaesthetic processing’ (4).

Users simply select from wordlists organised into sets based on the spelling rules taught in each of the year groups in the English primary curriculum. The first of 12 words is shown and pupils look at the word and then swipe to be able to hear it read aloud. The next swipe covers the word and pupils can visualise what the word looks and sounds like before swiping again to have a go at writing it. If they type it correctly a green tick is shown and they move onto the next word; if they’re incorrect they get another chance to try. When they have finished writing each word they can choose to play again, or view their results – this shows how many attempts they took to spell each word correctly. The great thing about Spelling Whizz is that users can create their own bespoke wordlists and add audio – this is perfect for teachers writing specific targeted spelling lists for children to learn. Once a list has been created it can be shared. Sharing a list generates a unique code which can be given to children in class or as part of their home learning. Entering the code enables children to download the list onto devices anywhere and anytime. This saves teachers’ precious time as they only need to write the list once to get it on a whole set of iPads, and parents don’t need to worry about entering the spelling home learning into their devices at home – they just enter the code and play!
Spelling Whizz is being used nationally and globally to help teachers and parents help children to learn to spell. It has been used for over a year at Corsham Primary School. Hannah Skidmore, a Y3 teacher at the school uses it in class as well as for providing spelling lists for home learning. She says, ‘Spelling Whizz is a fantastic and easy to use app that supports children with learning their spellings. You can create your own spelling lists or access lists of spellings that children should know in each school year which have been created based on the new national curriculum. As a class teacher it is so easy to create my own spelling lists on the app. You are assigned a code when you have created a list and parents/carers/children simply enter the code in the app and the spelling list appears – it’s as easy as that! Many parents have told me that the only way they can get their children to practise their spellings is on the Spelling Whizz app. Children are definitely more engaged and also have more fun whilst practising their spellings.’

It’s not just Hannah that has reported improved parental engagement - people leaving reviews on the app store have also highlighted the impact the app has had on the engagement of their children. Simon Merchant’s review said, ‘It’s always been a challenge to get Jonathan interested in his spelling homework so the iPad format provides an instant engagement platform. As a parent I get the reassurance that this app has been written by teachers who understand the curriculum and successful learning methodologies.

Another teacher at Corsham Primary School, Reuben Elliott who teaches Y6, has taken the use of the Spelling Whizz app a step further by carrying out a randomised control trial to assess the effectiveness of using ICT to improve pupil outcomes. Reuben reports, ‘As a Year 6 team we are constantly evaluating the efficacy of different interventions, so as to best meet the needs of our pupils. One key area of development for us this year has been improving spelling attainment and as such, when given the opportunity to take part in a teacher-led action research project, this seemed like a logical focus. Previous research had concluded that an effective way of improving spelling retention in children was to use the standard Look Say Cover Write Check method. However, from our own observations we had noticed that whilst this was an effective method of practising spellings, it was difficult to keep all children engaged in the process over time. With this in mind, we set out to carry out a randomised control trial with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of using ICT to improve children’s performance and engagement in spelling. We have been using
the Spelling Whizz app in a number of ways in our year group since it was introduced. Initially, we used the app as a means of providing regular intervention for our lower attaining spellers, but it quickly became apparent that it was a powerful tool in engaging our children, both at school and at home. Whilst we are still in the data collection phase of our research, we have already made some key observations about using the app as a means of engaging children in the process of practising spellings and consequently improving their attainment in this area of the curriculum:

1) Speed of practice: across all abilities, handwriting has been a key limiting factor in the amount of practice achieved. The children’s fluency in using iPad technology breaks down this barrier and allows children of all abilities to practise more spellings, in a shorter period of time.

2) Modelling: as those setting the spelling lists record themselves saying each word, it provides the learner with a carefully modelled verbal example every time they practise a word. This really improves the consistency and quality of practice, both in school and at home. We know that a number of our disadvantaged families find supporting their child with spellings quite difficult and the Spelling Whizz app has been a great way of improving the quality and quantity of practice undertaken by these children, out of school.

3) Feedback: children really like the instantaneous feedback that the app provides them. When they make an error, they can access personalised feedback on where they went wrong.

4) The ease of facilitating learning: as a teacher, implementing an intervention in any form is constrained by the amount of time it takes to plan and resource it. The real power in the Spelling Whizz app is the ease of pushing out spelling lists to other devices, allowing those setting the learning to quickly and efficiently create content and share it with the learners.’

Pupils in Reuben’s class were very positive about the impact of using the app to support their learning: ‘I think it’s a lot easier and a more fun way of learning spellings. It gets you to practise it more because you can do more spellings than when you are writing them out.’ (Charlie); ‘It was a really fast-paced way of learning our spellings.’ (Myrren); ‘I thought it was a really good way of getting the spellings into our heads because it was a really 21st century approach.’ (Matthew); ‘I thought it was really good. By the end of the week my spelling score was way higher. It really clicked in my mind!’ (Ruby); ‘It was really fun. It was a good way because it is not just writing them down lots of times. I liked that it was doing Look Say Cover Write Check but on an iPad.’ (Mackenzie)

We all learn differently - using technology does not work for everyone, and it should not be used at all times. Technology should always be a complement rather than a replacement for traditional methods of teaching. We should analyse how children learn best, thinking about different subjects and strategies, and ask them how they would prefer to learn. If some children will perform better painting words on a fence or using a device to learn to spell, whilst others would prefer to use pen and paper to do so, encourage them to make these choices, try out different options, and persuade them to take more ownership for their learning. Learning to spell and practising spellings can be engaging and motivating – pick one new strategy from the above to try out in your class this week!

For more information about Spelling Whizz app search the AppStore: https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/spelling-whizz/id1055278810?mt=8

James Passmore is Director of Gecko Learning Ltd www.geckolearning.co.uk and Director of Pickwick Learning’s Teaching School Alliance www.pltsa.co.uk.
The Graduated Response: making it effective in an early years setting

The Code of Practice is clear - all teaching should be high quality, with careful monitoring of progress and carefully planned interventions. When this is in place, identification of any learning needs will be more efficient. Early identification and early action is vital to prevent any further delay in the child making progress.

Settings should use the 4-stage graduated approach - assess, plan, do and review, with evidence of progress used to inform next steps. This evidence trail is important when/if an Education Health Care Plan (EHC Plan) process formally begins.

When a setting makes special educational provision for a child with SEN, a maintained nursery must inform the parents, other settings should inform the parents. This process is led and co-ordinated by the SENCO who supports practitioners. The principles of early support do enable a fast track process of serious concerns regarding special needs to be noted. The following diagram outlines the graduated response in practice:
**CHILD FILE 1:**

**KEY**
The dotted blue arrow indicates fast track early intervention if needs are significant.

(Source: Achievement for All, 2015)
The ‘structured conversation’ model employed in the *Achievement Early* programme has been particularly effective in enabling parents to engage with their children’s learning and practitioners/settings to get to know the children better. The structured conversation provides space and time for parents to talk to the practitioner or teacher (and if appropriate their child) about their child, his/her learning, strengths, weaknesses and aspirations.

For some children interventions may better support their learning and development. These can be put in place as appropriate. They should be regularly monitored in the context of the child’s progress. If the child is not making expected progress with a particular intervention, practitioners should consider what else may be needed. It may mean changing the intervention or it may mean moving towards a formal needs assessment, the next step in EHC Plan process.

### Discussion point

Reflect on what you have just read in relation to enabling children who have or may have an SEN. Consider the graduated response flowchart. Focus (mentally) on 3-4 children in your setting and consider what you are doing to support their learning. Follow through the flow chart. What could you do better? How could you make better provision for children who have or may have a SEN?

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The tasks are based on the major strands of the new curriculum (e.g. spelling, grammar and punctuation) and give a result for each strand. Most of the tests are formal timed assessments; some are less formal.

**What is assessed?**
Each assessment covers the age-specific objectives of the National Curriculum. This includes strands usually allocated to teacher assessment (such as the range of reading). This offers a full and fair assessment for younger pupils.

**Is the mark scheme easy to use?**
The teacher’s resource pack gives you a clear and very straightforward marking scheme. While the pupil records are useful for feeding back to parents.

**What are other schools saying?**
“The style is appropriate to current SATs papers and the content is organised well throughout: topics covered a section at a time. We feel the tests are age-appropriate.”
Forest View Junior School, Notts

“Clear and useful - effective and detailed.”
‘The Three Schools’, Milton Keynes

“They are easy to follow and show clearly which objective children are missing or haven’t understood.”
Naburn Primary School, York

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<th>Product</th>
<th>Qty</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year 1 Annual Primary Assessment with Teachers Guide (Photocopiable Master pack with Site Licence)</td>
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<td>£75.00</td>
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<td>Year 3 Annual Primary Assessment with Teachers Guide (Photocopiable Master pack with Site Licence)</td>
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<td>Year 4 Annual Primary Assessment with Teachers Guide (Photocopiable Master pack with Site Licence)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 5 Annual Primary Assessment with Teachers Guide (Photocopiable Master pack with Site Licence)</td>
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