Thinking teacher; from black to grey.

My ideas usually come not at my desk writing but in the midst of living. Anais Nin

Be true to yourself and grow yourself; you are a work in progress…Chris Chivers

Contents

Stay true to your values and principles. These will develop over time, but should be the touchstone for your practice and the demands placed upon you during your career. Stick with your instincts. If something doesn't feel right to you, it probably isn't. So, question what you are asked to do and whether it is the right thing to do.

Always remember why you wanted to be a teacher. For me it was to make a difference for all pupils, and because I love working with young people. When times are tough and you are facing challenges try to remember why you do what you do, and the difference it makes to so many lives.

Stay positive and ignore the negativity you will come across in individuals and some staffrooms. Find the positive people, who feel good about themselves and the work they do, and make sure they find you for the same reasons.

George Gilchrist

With thanks to George Gilchrist for the quote above, from my 1000 years of experience blog.

Introduction

We are all, or should become, life-long learners. Life offers opportunities and challenges. We need to develop children and adults capable of taking advantage of opportunity and facing challenge and becoming active solution finders to their own problems.

This book is an attempt to reflect on a long career and consider the generic needs of teachers, from their personal starting point, into their early career.

In thinking about learning, whether as an adult or how children learn, we often learn things in a slightly haphazard way, as life, in general offers experiences, outside a formal learning context, whether through visits, talking to others, reading or other situations where we pick up information.

Much of my working life, for the past eleven years has been spent in school and individual development, working alongside schools and teachers at different stages in their careers.

We are all, after all, works in progress, and I know I still have much to learn and I hope, a sufficiently long and active life in which to do so.

Over the past few years, I have become something of a blogger, reflecting on my day to day experiences in schools, working on a broad range of projects, but with the essence being how to develop teachers and schools, so that the children get the best possible deal in their education.

It might be worth considering the notion of a consultant more as a mentor, as someone to talk to, to consult, who may have expertise that is useful. If experts rule the world, we might just end up with problems. Life is for human beings, with the tendency to have faults and make errors occasionally.

I hope that this book is not an error.

In developing my blog, I have kept in mind a central driving principle, which I use on my home page.

Since my early training I have been convinced
that the greatest service any teacher can do for children
in the earliest stages of education
is to **instil a love of learning, to enjoy enquiring and to generate questions**
which they can then seek to answer,
by a variety of means, and share with others.

To learn to think, to talk and to question is the birthright of every child.

This simplification of a much broader approach
has been my guiding principle
both as a classroom teacher and as a head teacher,
seeking to harness children's interests to become dynamic learners
in and out of school, both in school and all other settings.

The development of learning
through making explicit appropriate cross-curricular links,
starting from relevant first-hand experiences,
gives children both thematic overviews and the ability to explore,
discover and place relevant individual items of information within a wider context.
This is often now described as a metacognitive approach, learning about learning,
but I would argue that it is, and always has been, good education practice.

Children need to have a grasp of where their current learning fits
into the wholeness of their knowledge,
to know where and how to store this for future use,
and to have skills of rapid recall,
so that the information or skill can be applied in other contexts.

Children should learn to become solution finders.

On Childhood

Teachers (adults) should remember childhood, a once in a lifetime chance to explore, make sense of the close world and be introduced to broader themes, adding to the sum of personal knowledge, while developing an ever broadening set of skills which permit this to be accomplished with independence.

Learning is taking on challenge, solving problems, seeking answers to own questions, using all available resources, human, literary or digital. Developing ever sophisticated communication skills to share outcomes.

Others (family members) walk alongside, supporting, guiding, leading, joining in and picking them up when they fall. Subtle and gentle, sometimes directive; it's a team game.

A case of weep, for potential lost childhoods?

I can remember my own childhood, with the aid of black and white photos, as a time of being outside, running around with friends, exploring local meadows, fishing in the River Exe, all unaccompanied by an adult.

Time in Australia, as an eight to eleven year old, with more outdoors, all barefoot, joining in sports of all kinds, just for the enjoyment; swimming, boating, sea fishing with regular catching of sharks. Catching all kinds of exotic creepy crawlies, developing a life-long love of nature, sometimes possibly with what some might think mild cruelty, although we didn't think that at the time- catching snakes with forked sticks or cockroach racing along the pier.

Childhood was fun and we learned by doing. We learned to be independent at an early age, resilient against the weather and how to cope with danger, climbing trees and rock faces, jumping off (low) cliffs into the sea. We learned life skills, especially how to get along together.

Running, jumping, climbing, fishing, exploring independently- when do the current generation get to do that? Often indoors in leisure centres, or play areas, they are organised, ordered, transported, cosseted, dry, safe and warm. All laudable experiences, but life is outside too, a big wide world of possibility and opportunity, that allows greater access to understanding new vocabulary, oral and written, ensuring greater insight into narrative texts.

Instead of talking about childhood and how to make it the best time of their lives, we have people in authority speculating on how to make school days longer and reduce holidays. Although speculation,

wedges appear to have two edges and this thin edge might just be the beginning of a bright new idea.

Perhaps there needs to be a movement to support childhood and family life?

This generation will be working long enough; let them enjoy childhood.

Becoming a reflective professional.

Developing a thinking log; having a dia(log) with yourself.

Good or outstanding schools are, in my experience, usually reflective institutions, across all staff, having an impact on students.

I've always valued clarity of thought and admired people who are able to effortlessly speak with passion and detail, even more so if they speak without notes, or appear to be doing so.

For the whole period of my sixteen years of headship, I kept a running log book of my thinking about the school. Most thinking is of a developmental kind, not fully formed, unless you have the equivalent of a PC brain, and there are some of those. Lesser mortals need to work through things in ways that help them to make sense. Some prefer their tablets or laptops, but, for me, I have yet to find a system more effective, Luddite, or elderly, that I am, than a blank sheet of paper, closely supported by post-its.

The thinking log was not my idea. It was shared during a Deputy Head training opportunity, led by the late Neville West, who was, at the time, Reader in Education at Sussex Uni. The idea was t counter the natural tendency to take secretarial notes, which then require close reading to extract the essence. It also allows some greater concentration on the content of the talk and discussion, as ideas arose.

The premise is a simple one. Leave page one of a hard back note book blank, which can later become a contents list, and turn to the first double page. Only write notes from talks or your reading, on one side, probably the right hand for right-handed writers, leaving the opposite page free for your reflections, or, in my case, the questions that sprang to mind, either to share within the discussion, afterwards with colleagues, or for further reflection after the event. The mirror page can also permit a précis of thinking to be developed, for ease of future recovery (which could links with the idea of revision, if summary boxes were developed.)

Plans for school improvements were developed in the same way and were often presented to staff as works in progress, to allow their thinking to have a strong influence at the development stage. I felt that it was important not to be seen as a head who only presents final thoughts, as it supports my belief in collegiality. If everyone is party to developing ideas and processes, they then have a stake in ensuring it is enacted effectively. A top down model requires several stages of assimilation before it can be delivered. This is often a weakness of national policy, which is rarely the subject of consensus and often has a polarising effect.

So keeping a personal dia(log) can support this way of thinking. It can also support teacher planning, as the two page approach allows the clear plan on one side and note taking on the other. It allows

different forms of note making, such as "mind mapping" variants, drawing, diagrams, as well as verbatim written text.

The dia(log) idea became part of the basis for the development of the two page approach to writing, along with ideas from the National Writing Project, used to good effect in the school for several years.

The dia(log) approach lends itself to a wide variety of applications. I now use a variation during school visits, where a blank sheet is used to capture on-going discussions. At the end of the discussion, the sheet is folded back, allowing a short summary, which will be the basis for the report, or an early recount with the staff.

Revising for exams is often a fraught period. Developing a note-making mentality can support future needs and reduce the need to overlearn every aspect.

Worth a thought in the dia(log)?

Teachers are and always have been, the lead thinkers and decision makers in a classroom:-

- **They need to know the subject at hand**, which may be different for a graduate specialist in a Secondary school compared to a Primary generalist, responsible for a range of subjects, where some personal subject knowledge will be stronger than others.
- They will have **ordered the curriculum** into discrete themes, topics or programmes of study. They order and organise the coherence of their plans over a known timescale, ensure that classroom and the resources for learning support the learning proposed.
- They **know their children**, to varying degrees, depending on their contact time through the week, but they are trained to understand learner development through the age range.
- Their plans seek to **match the needs of the subject with the needs of the children**, providing appropriate challenge to all abilities.
- They **plan learning over a timescale** to ensure a dynamic is established which fully engages learners, in and out of school, and assures the imparting of a particular body of knowledge.
- They **create tasks appropriate to the challenge**, with an understanding of the subsequent developmental stages of the learning, so that by engaging with the learners while on task, they are able to guide and support their developing understanding.
- They ensure that **teacher input gets across the essential information** on which the lesson is to be founded, through a variety of means, which are enhanced by the availability of in-class ICT facilities.
- They **ensure that behaviour allows learning to take place**.
- They **interact with outcomes**, orally in class and in writing after the lesson, while marking books. They are constantly making judgements, on an individual, group or class level.
- They **use the outcomes as new reference points** against which to plan the next steps.
- They **undertake personal CPD** that enhances their practice.
- And they add broader value to schools in many other ways…………………

If teacher-think is the essential component of enhanced learning opportunities, there needs to be

consideration of the barriers to this thinking. There will be more for each list.

Personal barriers:-

- Subject or pedagogic knowledge.
- Extended experience with a specific age group or ability range. (New school, new year group)
- Personal order, organisation, record keeping, reflective practice.
- **Self-confidence,** possible status with learners.

External:-

- Demands for planning (thinking) in a particular format
- School specific, preferred approaches to teaching and learning
- School specific schemes, with **limited opportunity to adapt** to class need
- School organisation demanding whole year approaches
- School resources, including the availability of support.
- Work space limiting some approaches.
- Regular changes to practice to accord with external influences.
- Local context issues, such as parent demands, children arriving at school with social or personal issues, behavioural distractions.
- Changes at National level, particularly where there is an extended period of uncertainty about policy interpretation.

Fear:-

- The greatest impact on teacher-think is the fear of being judged as ineffective and found wanting. There is a need to quality-assure teaching and learning is a school. It is naïve to think otherwise, but the systems in place can add to the stress of being observed, both at school and inspection level.
- The value of feedback from an observation is to retell the lesson narrative, highlighting significant points, as a basis for discussion and development. Internal observations should always happen on this basis, not as a numeric judgement, in the same way that feedback to learners to support future learning is better as description than an arbitrary grade.
- Teachers work within human systems, which can appear sometimes to be less than humane. The best systems look out for the individuals who make up the team, providing support and guidance to colleagues in the same way they do to children. Even the best practitioners can suffer a dip in performance when life offers personal challenges. Thoughtful, reflective management breeds thoughtful, reflective, autonomous teachers and independence in learners.

   Teaching is a great job, but free the teachers to think, that's what they are paid to do.

Introduction; food for thought

Be true to yourself and grow yourself; you are a work in progress…

We are all, or should become, life-long learners. Life offers opportunities and challenges. We need to develop children and adults capable of taking advantage of opportunity and facing challenge, becoming active solution finders to their own problems.

Teachers instil a love of learning, to enjoy enquiring and to generate questions.

To learn to think, to talk and to question is the birthright of every child.

Children should learn to become solution finders.

Become a reflective practitioner; think your thoughts, share them with others.

Teachers need to: -

- Be ordered and organised.

- Have good subject (development) knowledge.

- Understand child development, know the children in their classes well.

- Be excellent "storytellers", getting across ideas with language appropriate to their audience.

- Create challenging learning tasks.

What gets people into teaching in the first place?

When I was interviewing for staff as a headteacher and when I am interviewing prospective entrants into the profession for ITE providers, I ask what on the surface is a relatively simple question; **"What was the significant event that persuaded you that you could be a teacher?"** This allows the interviewee to reflect on their past, but also to develop the theme through significant skills that they bring to bear on their role. This tipping point can be important to explore, especially where the candidate is a mature trainee, changing career course.

I have a vivid memory of one trainee who described how she had been involved in a summer residential scheme with a group of physically disabled children and supported them individually to overcome fears to be able to attempt to tackle a climbing wall. Another told of how he had worked in a refugee camp and learned that he could find innovative ways to help children learn without expensive resources. The insights and the obvious enjoyment of the experience came through and they both went on to become a very high grade prospective teachers.

While some get into teaching through their interactions with children, discovering that they can communicate effectively and make relationships, enabling their charges to attempt challenge, others love their subject and sharing their knowledge. Marrying the two creates a whole, which is the purpose of teacher training; the what and the how.

Why did I become a teacher?

I had a job with ICI, in a biological research station, nestled into an old quarry beside Brixham fishing harbour. Becoming a "scientist" had been my lifelong ambition. The reality, of counting bivalves and worms in bottom samples that we sourced from the North Sea off Teeside and Whitby, palled after several months, partly because of the horrendous effects of sea-sickness and partly the counting. Finish one tray, record, start another. When looking at colleagues who had progressed to Experimental Officer, it became clear that I'd be doing the same for years to come. I loved the outdoors, the environment, entomology, history, geography; in fact I was interested in the world around me. Ok, I was probably a bit geeky, in that respect.

A mature team colleague at Paignton Cricket Club had just finished his teaching course at St Lukes College, in Exeter. This was 1971. There was a great need for teachers, as the post-war trained teachers were retiring, or would do so within a few years. There would be opportunities opening up, the prospect of promotion and potentially aspiration to headship.

Booking a day off, I took the train from Paignton to Exeter to chat to someone about the possibility of training. As it was June, the campus was empty, but a kind receptionist tracked the head of science to his room and sent me along. We chatted broadly, across science, but also sport (St Lukes was a PE college) and after half an hour asked if I wanted this to be an official interview. Fifteen minutes later, I was sent to fill in the application forms and started that September. That is a decision that I have never regretted, even when the going has been really tough. I found my natural niche.

Becoming a teacher was never designed to make me rich; perhaps comfortable was the best that could be hoped. I started teaching in the year of the Houghton award, where teacher pay was

enhanced after many years of very low pay rises. Four times that income, plus a small borrowed deposit, was enough for the mortgage that bought the first house; I could aspire. Today, a teacher in similar position would need a mortgage ten times their income and a large deposit. That cultural shift may well have an impact on thinking.

What kept me in teaching?

When I entered teacher training college in 1971, to become a teacher was a high point in my family.

No-one had ever gone to university level training, and with the prospect of a vocation, I was seen as "being set for life", which, to post-war generations, was seen as very important. Of course the vision included getting married, buying a house, having children, staying on the tracks.

I want to unpack a few episodes through my career that offered points for reflection and could have changed decisions.

I remember nearly giving up during my second year of training, not because of the course, where I was getting good grades, but money and housing insecurity, and worries about where to live during holidays. With my father remarried and "no room at their inn", I was reliant on and getting very worried about, my grandmother, who was then in her early 80s. Could I impose on her for yet another set of holidays? It became clear, during correspondence (real letters, none of these texts and emails) with my gran and my uncle that I'd cause more hurt by not going. Fortunately, I got a job, delivering fizzy drinks and squash, throughout South Devon. I ate well as I travelled, so needed less at home.

I did the getting married and buying a house, early, and, even though I enjoyed much of my first teaching role, in a Boy's secondary school, being given the ROSLA (Raising of the School Leaving Age) groups as a probationer teacher, asking for, and not getting, support from heads of department about schemes of work, I made the decision to move for sanity.

The next three and a half years were spent pleasantly developing as a teacher, working with children from a wide variety of backgrounds, from the well-to-do in their large houses, to the resettled traveller families on the local council estate. I took on tasks and responsibilities that prepared for any future promotions.

The whole system was stuck as far as promotions and movements were concerned, as the immediate post war generation was waiting for retirement, so newbies literally had to wait for dead men's shoes. The County initiated a scheme of voluntary redeployment, enabling schools to recruit from a pool, without the need to advertise; a little bit of early headhunting. As a result, I was recruited to a local junior school on a promoted post. Despite early promise, and much success in the sporting area, somehow my face didn't quite fit. It became clear that the head was deliberately seeking my removal. Colleagues were delightful, knew the little peccadilloes of the head and understood.

It turned out to for the best, as I was able to move to a school that had been open only a few years, led by a visionary head, who had brought together an exceptional team, who all went on to headship, over time. Discussion, challenge, support, mutual coaching and genuine team work combined to ensure that everyone felt personally significant and an important part of the development.

Children and the need to survive on one salary caused a tension, as the school was not on conventional transport routes and I needed a car. I think this was a significant point in becoming a full blown vegetarian, as pulses are far cheaper than meat. Camping also became the main holiday option. It was a case of "cutting cloth" appropriately.

Promotion to year leader, in a school only a couple of miles from home, and my wife's return to part time teaching, reduced a number of financial issues. While in this post, I took on the voluntary role of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust coordinator for Watch, the junior arm, having run a successful local group once a month. Doubling the membership, running many successful wildlife related activities, poetry, writing and art based, meant that when the national organiser vacancy came up, I was canvassed to apply. It was tempting. Housing costs in Lincolnshire was half that of Hampshire, but the salary was half that of a teacher and there was no clear progression. Also, family was in Hampshire.

My natural caution kicked in. I demurred and instead started a Master's level advanced diploma in Reading and Language Development, which meant 5.00am waking up to do an hour or two before the family woke up. Did someone mention workload?

Suffice to say that preparation for promotions meant that I got to deputy and then headship, after 16 years of very enjoyable (apart from one year) classroom experience, across the 4-16 age range.

Headship coincided with the birth of child 3 and, within a couple of years, a diagnosis of breast cancer for my wife. Life had to become as settled as possible, to balance home and school, so we bought a hovel in France, to allow playtime as peasants. Electrics and plumbing, along with carpentry and coppicing are significant distractions.

I built a strong teaching team and a strong support organisation around them that allowed teachers to operate at their best. That is the job of leadership, to order, organise and to take a lead. I made sure that the pattern of the school year enabled all staff to have proper recovery time, by taking stock of classroom and school demands, creating a working timetable that didn't put parent evenings at the end of long terms, or demand long reports straight after a holiday. Much school organisation is in our own hands. It takes a little time to get it right.

Staff change, as colleagues went onto promotion and Ofsted, as well as relapses in D's breast cancer meant that I didn't take all the opportunities that presented themselves.

I am still in education because it is, as far as I am concerned, the best job anyone can do. My oneness, and my delight in learning, might ignite, over a career, a thousand thinkers in their turn, so multiplying my impact.

The simplicity in my case, was aspiration, opportunity, pleasure (and manageable pain), and then life and responsibilities. Each of us is different, in any of these variable elements. The pain threshold can impact on all other areas in life.

Currently, the pain for many teachers is being caused by perceptions of external forces that are not in the profession's control. I would suggest that it is this that is beginning to cause a significant number to reconsider their futures. If there are alternative career choices, with comparable or

better salaries and opportunity and personal situations allow, I can easily see how these decisions are made.

But, I know that I have only lived my life. Your story will be different.

A process of getting better. Personal development.

The idea of CPD (continuing professional development) can be a contentious one, in that every teacher needs to be continually developing, seeking to be better, while the restrictions of the school budget can mean that this is piecemeal, if it is seen only in the context of time at courses, off site, led by an expert in a field. This approach can be costly, with course costs, supply cover and some disruption to the classes being left behind.

A long time ago, when I qualified, all courses were run at our local teacher's centre, as twilight offerings, usually led by a local teacher over a six week timescale, to a theme, which enabled reflection in between, trial in class and reportage and professional discussion, which was particularly valuable where for some this had meant success, while others found disaster. Context and background preparation was shown to be a significant factor.

If you were lucky, you got to go on a "Gurney Dixon". This meant an overnight stay at the authority residential centre, for a two day course. These were special and often ran at weekends, so that working weeks became endless, even if you were one of the chosen ones. However, it also meant, on at least three occasions, sleeping in a single room where the caretaker had stored the toilet rolls and the shared bathroom facilities often left much to be desired. The quality professional discussion was often developed over a drink at a local hostelry, sharing classroom notes, away from the bustle of school life.

After four years in teaching, I extended my earlier qualification with attendance at a local Polytechnic to undertake a post graduate Diploma in Education in Environmental Sciences. This was to extend my earlier Environmental Studies for Primary schools focus. Two years twilight study with weekend field studies, fitted with not yet having children, which was a feature of an Advanced Diploma in Reading and Language Development. This meant studying for the two years from 5-7am, before the family got up. Somehow, I managed to miss out on the broader secondment opportunities.

Lesson 1 CPD; talk with your colleagues; they have expertise and insights to share.

Working in an open plan school for four years, enabled much informal CPD, as a head round the curtain, a chat on the way to and from the staffroom, sitting on a table before or after school, chatting over activities, displays, specialist subjects, enabled a drip feed of ideas to be developed. Copying was allowed. Equally, where issues in a year group might be causing some concern, to be able to pop next door, to the year above or below, allowed discussion of what could be tried to remedy or accelerate the children with appropriate tasking.

Lesson 2 CPD; link with an ITE institution, take students and see having them as mentoring training and personal development across a wide perspective.

Having a student teacher, on an extended practice, ensures that the teacher, acting as mentor, has to unpick all aspects of their professional practice to engage fully with the student needs. It can also

be the case that watching a student teacher prompts reflection on the part of the mentor. It certainly enables reflection on the class needs, as the mentor can spend time observing their learning approaches and work closely with specific individuals. This working closely can provide the basis for a more analytical approach than is often available, so deepens the teacher understanding and refines the T&L approach taken.

A good relationship with an ITE institution can result in a constant stream of good quality students, who provide additional personnel, and, once established as the class teacher, can enable cross-school release, for colleagues to observe each other, with mentors acting as cover.

Lesson 3 CPD; take advantage of local offerings, twilight or (occasional) Saturdays. Build up a personal network of colleagues.

Newly organised, teachmeets can be a way to take part in free CPD opportunities. They are twilights, usually have some refreshments and are a good way to meet colleagues from other schools. It's a chance to get away early, with a purpose. Ideas are shared, which can be taken away, stored and use when needed.

In addition, there is now a range of Saturday gatherings, some free, others at a cost, that support teacher sharing at a deeper level, with colleagues sharing their specialist areas. Examples are Teaching and Learning Takeover, ResearchEd, Northern Rocks.

Lesson 4 CPD; Blog, keep a weblog of your ideas, share them online, through social media like Twitter. Online conversations are fast becoming an outlet for professional discussion, sharing extended ideas with blogs, enabling feedback comments, which in turn enable further reflection.

Lesson 5 CPD; personal development takes time.

It is not something that happens on one day. Teaching is a reflective profession. Ideas are the bread and butter of teaching and learning. Working in collaboration, with internal colleagues or from another school, clarifies thinking and refines personal practice.

Lesson 6 CPD; do some extended study at Post Grad level.

Many institutions now support in-school research/investigation as the means to gaining credits, so that in-house development can also be linked with personal CPD. That can be the quid pro quo; you run the improvement, write it up, for school and uni and gain credit, both for school improvement and as a qualification. Both are very useful for the CV and promotion.

Lesson 7 CPD; it's about you. Take charge, organise, join in discussions, lead idea development. Be proactive; CPD is you developing yourself, not (just) something that someone does to you. It is embedded in the teacher standards; **no 8, professionalism.**

But for all that:

I have lived a reasonably long time, survived and enjoyed a full career in schools, have held all responsibility posts in Primary schools, both in terms of subject responsibilities over time, but also management responsibility up to headship, have undertaken a few post graduate levels of study, listened to a range of speakers, read a number of books, but,

I am not an "expert".

Why not?

For a very simple reason. I have had "my experience"; have seen those experiences through my eyes and distilled my thinking through my own reflections. I've taught in particular schools, with their own ethos, so have derived my own through that lens. I cannot hope to have read "all" the books nor listened to "all" the speakers, but I also know that every experience I've had has left a mark on me in some way, some immediately, more often than not, later, as a result of further reflection. I am also aware that there is a litter trail of ideas that were considered and put to one side at the time, because they did not support the holistic direction of school development.

I am, and always have been, a "work in progress", which I think sums up the idea of a life-long learner. I am aware that it will have had an impact on my decisions, throughout my life.

I have had my own personal life experiences, which I wrote about on my blog. Some of these experiences will have been shared by some readers, but not others. They have given me insights and empathy for those in similar situations. I know that, at times, life can be tough, but I am not living the life of those for whom it is toughest.

I am not an expert.

We are asked to consider our biases, which we all carry. I'd prefer to consider them, tendencies or personal preferences. I am inevitably drawn to certain things rather than others. An example would be in art, where I enjoy the Impressionist style, but also developments such as Cubism. I like listening to, playing for and singing folk music, although that is within a more eclectic appreciation of music generally. I am an unashamed Francophile. J'habite en Angleterre, je vive en France.

All these (favourite) things make me the person that I am. An eclectic mix of life and learning experiences. Each has contributed to making me the person I am.

Je ne suis pas "expert"

But, I do have a lifetime of expertise, skills and knowledge that is the residue of the breadth of these experiences. After headship, I have had the chance to use this expertise to the advantage of a wide variety of schools, supporting them to think about certain areas where development was still needed. One of my skills is distilling information and reflecting back to a school where evidence might be weaker than they think, so could be a vulnerable area.

I can only ever give thought to that which I know, although I can articulate questions that arise and for which I try to seek answers. My thoughts at a particular moment may not chime with someone else's, but that does not negate them. All ideas are food for thought, so are worthy of expression. To seek to do otherwise could be a form of censorship, which is a "very bad thing", in a world where we still allow free speech.

I am not an expert, although I blog to explore and share ideas. Occasionally, my insights seem to resonate. They are insights, and like all insights can be developed further.

Others may be seen as experts, by virtue of their own publications and their very public pronouncements about the views of others. They have become de facto "experts", so have joined the group that they seek to challenge. This can only lead to polarisation and self-limiting behaviours from those that feel more vulnerable.

The opportunities to share ideas have broadened considerably over the past ten years, with many, and a growing band of excellent members of the blogging and speaking community sharing high quality thinking regularly. It would be a great shame if this came to a standstill. The only casualty would be everyone's education.

We are all, after all, works in progress, and I know I still have much to learn and I hope, a sufficiently long and active life in which to do so.

It might be worth considering the notion of a consultant as someone to talk to, to consult, who may have expertise that is useful. If experts rule the world, we might just end up with problems. Life is for human beings, with the tendency to have faults and make errors occasionally.

I hope that this book is not an error.

What gets people into teaching in the first place? Food for thought

Always remember the significant event that persuaded you that you could be a teacher.

Continuing Professional Development; a process of getting better, including personal development.

Talk with your colleagues; they have expertise and insights to share.

Link with an ITE institution, take students and see having them as mentoring training and personal development across a wide perspective.

Take advantage of local offerings, twilight or (occasional) Saturdays. Build up a personal network of colleagues.

Blog, keep a weblog of your ideas, share them online, through social media like Twitter.

Personal development takes time.

Do some extended study at Post Grad level

CPD; it's about you.

On professionalism and team work

Professionalism, in the Teacher Standards that were rewritten for September 2012, embed a number of elements that can sometimes seem self-evident. However, they also describe the essence of what it means to be a teacher.

When I (occasionally) reread them, especially the statements on professionalism, I get the feeling of when I was a cub scout, reciting the promise; to do my best at all times…

- make a positive contribution to the wider life and ethos of the school
- develop effective professional relationships with colleagues, knowing how and when to draw on advice and specialist support
- deploy support staff effectively ⯀ take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues
- communicate effectively with parents with regard to pupils' achievements and well-being.

There is a part two of the teacher standards, which can seem even more general, ensuring that individuals uphold the standing of the profession.

A teacher is expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct. The following statements define the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct throughout a teacher's career.

Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by:

- treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
- having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions o showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- ensuring that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.

Teachers must have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach, and maintain high standards in their own attendance and punctuality.

Teachers must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks which set out their professional duties and responsibilities.

Teaching is a team game

Chris Chivers @ChrisChivers2

Leaders; remember that you work through the efforts of the team.

Team well-being is essential to success.

I have always thought that teaching is essentially a team game, and, as such, relies on each member of the team for the whole to function effectively. The team leader(s) have to recognise that their plans, vision and aspirations for the organisation will succeed or fall, depending on how they manage to get the best out of the rest of the team.

As I read more and more of the blogs by current education leaders (Heads, SLT, Middle managers and classroom teachers), I constantly think that the system is blessed to have such an articulate, committed, thoughtful and reflective group of professionals, prepared to put their thinking on-line, with the potential for others to comment and further develop ideas. The value of the sharing is that, even if you disagree with them, they have shared, made you think and, more often than not, nudge your thinking subtly in a positive direction. The list of active bloggers in the UK runs to several hundred. That's a huge volume of shared thinking, from NQTs to school leaders.

With internet communication being instant, and the ubiquity of social media, it is possible to bring together a large number of professionals to discuss a common theme, as happens with #SLTchat and the other Twitter based formulations; it can, at times, be hard to know which to join. Twitter is also an "advertising space" for bloggers, who link their writing to tweets.

Twitter allows for continual themes, such as the #teacher5aday initiative, from @MartynReah, and my own #edn1000years, both of which, starting in December 2015, have taken on a life of their own.

I'd like to think that the, often very detailed, thinking being undertaken by the profession is being matched by "the powers that be". Occasionally there's a glimpse, a chink, as senior Ofsted people engage in "dialogue" across Twitter, with developing evidence that they are listening.

I don't think the same can always be said of a Government, or of the other political parties, all of whom seem to be following slightly varying versions of the same policy, with sound bites trumping coherent policies at every step.

The box at the header of this section talks of leaders working through the efforts of others and that looking after the team is a significant aspect of the leader role.

As a life-long multiple sports fan, former player and coach, I am acutely aware of the need to ensure that each player is fully fit. With the Six Nations rugby on our screens in February and March each year, it is essential for the coaches to be aware of each player, so that they are each at peak fitness in order to play a full part in the game. To not do so could put the team under strain, which is why judicious use of substitutes can play such a key role, in the same way that cover arrangements need to be effective.

In a school setting, the leadership role is to ensure that the environment is conducive to maximising outcomes, to provide the best possible spaces for teaching and resources that enable the teacher and the learners to make best use of them. Allocating appropriate time for learning is a key function of management. If lessons are too long or too short, there can be shortcomings.

Everything has to tie together.

One weakness in the system is often a lack of awareness of external issues that might impact on performance. This can affect leaders as well as others. Leaders need to reflect on their own

strengths and limitations so that they don't become the weak link. I blogged about this, to some extent in "When a school gets sick". Life happens to everyone, from the common cold, to "man flu", broken bones, broken spirits/minds and more.

The ability of the team to "carry" a member not fully functioning can be diminished if the carrying begins to weigh another down. Whole team awareness is therefore essential.

I have been reflecting that, while the need is for the "system" as a team to grow, on behalf of all children, there is the potential for those schools in a sufficiently fortunate position to be at the top of the current pile to be making great progress, as a result of a fit team capable of promoting that growth. By default, though, that growth and success might, in itself become demotivating to others, in the same way that in a class where the same child always comes "top" can become demotivating to the rest of the class.

The only real way forward is to see education as a whole as a giant team, all working to the same ends. Sadly, the constant fragmentation of the system, with schools pitted against each other rather mitigates against that ever happening.

The one way that this could have been enabled has been removed with assessment being devolved to schools. Just working out what "good" looks like, as learning outcomes could have been the common thread that held the whole together. Now we have schools competing to have their assessment models replicated throughout the country.

If there is, therefore, the need for each school to think for themselves, then I think schools should take that luxury unto themselves. Organise the building, the teaching spaces and the available resources to maximise potential. Think, envisage possibility, plan effectively and efficiently, put in the necessary support, mentoring, coaching and oversight to see through the plans, with set review points. Celebrate positives at all stages, Value contribution and say thank you, individually and collectively properly. Unpick the successes and the areas for further improvement, learn from the process and repeat with the next project.

Build on success, even small successes and be able to share the development narrative, the rationale and the outcomes to the wider audience. Learn from the best, yes, but also think for yourself. Learn from doing and reflecting.

Teaching is a team game. You either pull together, or you can pull apart.

Developing collegiality

Quotes (highlighted) are taken from Andy Hargreaves, who wrote 100 quotes for teaching.

"What we want for our students we should want for our teachers: learning, challenge, support, and respect."

Collegiate; late Middle English: from Old French collegial or late Latin collegialis, from collegium 'partnership'. Relating to or involving shared responsibility, as among a group of colleagues. The shared authority between two or more people who work together.

Many of the definitions link the word to Roman Catholic bishops, through the College of Cardinals,

so there was, at one stage a religious connotation, but embedded team action is inferred.

Having seen the establishment of a national College of Teachers, there was much talk about who it should be for, what the remit should be and so on. This could turn out to be a very positive step in teacher development. On the other hand it could ultimately become a distraction, as a few worthy souls are elected or selected to this higher plane and are then responsible for and responsible to the profession for every pronouncement and decision. It could, by default, become another "top-down" organisation.

Too often, shared visions really mean, "I have a vision; you share it"

The notion of a college of teachers in every staffroom does appeal to me and would be my personal starting point. As the dictionary definition says, it is in the form of collective (shared) responsibility, among a group of colleagues.

It was a singular pleasure after Ofsted visits, to have the positive reinforcement that my school was run on collegiate grounds. It was something that I believed in, wholeheartedly, in that my guiding premise was that I needed to ensure that the adults working with children were as well trained and supported to do their jobs as they could be. I was no longer in a position to do this myself, over the longer term, so I was reliant on others. So the space to work and the available resources had to be the best that we could afford.

All teachers are already leaders. It's in the nature of teaching

Support for each other was a central belief. Subject leaders were allowed to lead and develop colleagues, through release time; I provided that in a variety of different ways, before PPA time was a reality.

One simple way was to link with the local ITT provider and to take students on a regular basis. This increased the staffing of the school at little or no cost, and, with finalist teaching students, once they were settled in and effectively taking over, enabled the class teacher to withdraw for short periods, to undertake projects or to release other staff to do so. As we always took a pair of finalists, this allowed collaborative development.

We must use collegiality not to level people down but to bring together their strength and creativity.

Enabling colleagues to take a significant lead in developing others enhanced their personal professionalism, but also deepened the interpersonal relationships, so that mutual understandings were strong. Being aware to avoid group think, I was not averse to putting into the thinking pot something a little "off the wall"; I did often play "Devil's Advocate", if discussion seemed to be getting too cosy. The phrase "tongue in cheek" often prefaced a challenge. This also encouraged others to explore for a range of angles, so avoiding the pitfall of linearity through group think.

Staff meetings were often reporting back on research findings, new ideas etc, with a discussion paper ahead of the meeting, where it was appropriate, so that discussion was based on reflection, rather than reaction. This led to security in decisions and a definite "storyline" for the school. The support staff were invited to all development activities, so were part of the continuing discussion.

Collegiality, to my mind, also embeds aspects of well-being, in that everyone looks out for everyone else. That removes the burden from managers, although they are just then seen as part of the team. Teaching, if done properly, is a team game. One star player cannot create the basis for success, but a cohesive team can achieve a great deal by working together, led by a clear thinking manager able to focus on the journey.

Principles of collegiality.

- Everyone's a member.

- Everyone has an equal voice, within collective discussion.

- Everyone shares in reflection.

- Everyone is party to decisions.

- Everyone is responsible for carrying out collective decisions.

- Anyone can bring questions back to the college for discussion and clarification.

- Collegiality does not preclude an individual from trying out new ideas on behalf of the collective.

- **Professional trust is a process, not a state**

- **The quality & morale of teachers is absolutely central to the well-being of students and their learning**

- **In healthy individuals, emotions don't distort rationality, they enhance it**

To me, it seems self-evident that a system such as a school through which cohorts of children pass over a time scale, needs to be run on collective grounds. Each individual decision is taken within the corporate body has to be seen as serving the needs of that body. An individual only seeking to "do their own thing" can cause disruption or dislocation within the body, undermining the authoritative nature of the whole.

We will not achieve high performance in education if we replace teachers with machines or turn teachers into machines.

However, it is also evident that decisions cannot be mechanistic, within a human and humane system, dealing with the specific needs of individuals, so the system has to establish flexibilities within the system that allow for "human error".

Teaching is a never-ending story. The work is never over; the job is never done

Virtuosity; getting better at getting better

It is strange how one word can begin a train of thought which rumbles and twists around your brain, pulling together ideas and memories, which can then coalesce for a short while in a blog post, as a means of putting them together. In many ways this thought reminded me of my approach to school assemblies, which often came together through reflecting on a single word as the theme. The theme

this time was virtuosity, often used to define great skill in music or another artistic pursuit, eg "a performance of considerable virtuosity", but which, to me, can describe the qualities of a teacher who manages to make teaching look effortless. It masks the many hours of practice and errors, from which the reflective practitioner has altered and addressed issues.

Synonyms: skill, skilfulness, mastery, expertise, expertness, prowess, proficiency, ability, aptitude, adroitness, dexterity, deftness, excellence, brilliance, talent, genius, artistry, technique, art, creativity, flair, finish, polish, panache, finesse, wizardry, calibre, quality, professionalism.

Wisdom is knowing what to do next

Virtue is doing it

DAVID STARR JORDAN

In music, virtuosity is evident when an individual performs with or without significant reference to music, usually the latter, interpreting the composition in ways that share the emotion of the piece with the audience. The performer puts themselves into the music in such a way that the audience can almost feel it as well as hear it. This doesn't need to be showing off.

Virtuosity can be quiet efficiency and effectiveness, calm, controlled sharing. Yehudi Menuhin, Stephane Grapelli and Nigel Kennedy, as violinists have all been described as virtuosi or perhaps a prodigy, by displaying talent early. Each has had a distinctive style, in their respective genres, in terms of self-presentation and playing styles.

So virtuosity has to have something to do with talent and personal style.

My own relatively shallow experience in the music world derives from folk music, where my bodhran playing allowed me to play in France and England with barn dance and social dance bands, as well as playing in the Truffe de Perigeux, where our band Octan played in the final. We didn't win and I had to come home to headship! Tant pis.

It was a regular feature of meeting with other musicians that know-how became show-how with techniques shared, tunes and songs exchanged through immersion and rehearsed by playing together- jamming, just for enjoyment. As a result repertoires were extended, through personal effort, absorbing the new into the old, not just recreating the tricks and tips, but playing and singing in your own voice.

So virtuosity might mean the capacity to unpick and share.

Tricks, tips and bright ideas are the stock in trade of education. Teachmeets make this sharing easier, at least for the brave souls prepared to put themselves forward to share something from their classroom practice. It's really important to reflect and embed these ideas in a longer term plan, so that they have meaning and can be presented with confidence, just in case something goes wrong and can't be rectified, because it hasn't been thought through and rehearsed, whereas the "expert" has already thought through these details.

Virtuosity depends on capability with the tools and significant mental and physical reflection and rehearsal.

Virtuosity, to me, is a state of heightened professional and personal skill, honed through practice or rehearsal to a point where presentation becomes seamless. It can then be difficult for an observer to unpick the details.

Virtuosity should also be able to travel outside the safe contexts within which it has been honed.

In teaching terms, using the teaching standards as baseline descriptors, I'd suggest the following as a starter for a journey to virtuosity in teachers.

- They know their stuff well, breadth and well as depth, so can easily take alternative routes and come back to the main journey, as the need arises. TS3

- They are ordered and organised, mentally and with resources, in such a way that they make appropriate links, ensuring seamless classroom and learning management. TS4

- Learners have confidence in them, so they have professional status, demonstrated through positive relationships which allow learning activities to proceed effectively for all learners. TS8

- The teacher and the learners know the consequences of disrupted learning. Behaviour management is effective; consequences are seen through. TS7

- The teacher knows about child development, can place the learners in the class into appropriately challenging work situations that encourage talk and demonstration of high expectations, on a class and individual level. TS1

- The teacher understanding of learners allows detailed engagement with individual and class learning, guiding, modelling, coaching and mentoring as needed, adapting to needs as they arise and encouraging the best possible outcome. TS6,5&2

With repetition, the teacher gets to know the children even better, the children are clearer about expectation and the interactions become ever more productive.

CPD; a shared enterprise. Use your colleagues.

It's as "easy" as **TIC, TAC, TOE;** team inside the community, team around the community and team of experts.

If you are old enough to remember the days before Local Management of Schools, LMS, you will probably recall the limited funds available for schools to buy "essentials", such as all the consumables. If you were lucky, the authority, in the form of an adviser, might look kindly upon a project and offer a small pump-priming fund, usually supplemented by the PTA fund raising.

These were the days of twilight training sessions, often a series of five or six, at the local teacher's centre, led by local teachers whose expertise was identified as worth sharing. If you were lucky, you got to do a "Gurney Dixon"; a weekend at the County residential centre. It was not as swish as it might sound. On a few occasions, I had to share my room with the caretaker's stores, but it was taken as the norm; it was cheap training. The sessions cost the school nothing, but did demand a significant commitment to personal development. However, it did ensure that expertise was shared as widely as possible through the authority.

In-house expertise was equally generously shared, so that the "specialist" would be happy to spend time sharing ideas to help less experienced colleagues. I can remember leaving with ideas that I then went back to my classroom and played, or sat in the library and went through the available books. It was a time of self-help and self-reliance; make do and mend was the mantra. Pencil pots and other stationery containers, made from well-washed tins, covered in wallpaper, or if you were lucky, in sticky back plastic. Paper holders were adapted and covered soap powder boxes. Show boxes of the right size housed the cassette tapes.

LMS enabled internal decision making on school priorities, enabling often significant spending on quality equipment and staffing, especially if the school enjoyed a rising roll. "What would you like?" could replace "What do we need?"

CPD could become a casualty within a period of belt-tightening, unless there are some changes in approach. To send a member of staff off site, to a central site for a conference could cost several hundred pounds, with supply cover, travel, the cost of the conference and perhaps food. It doesn't take long for even a generous budget to be spent.

It has often been stated that there is as much discrepancy in practice within a school as there is between schools. What would be the case if every teacher in the community was as good as the best and how could that be achieved?

What do you do, though, to address the constant feeling of busyness?

TIC; Team inside the community. Are you a talking establishment? It's well worth while looking at the mechanisms within the school that enable an appropriate level of discussion and information sharing that starts with induction practices and then continues. Has the school audited the skills of each member of staff to see where well-needed expertise lies? How are staff meetings and closure days used to support the dissemination of expertise? Is coaching time made available? Is expertise made available in written form? Is there a staff bookshelf, and is it actually used?

Short term additional "staffing" can become a reality within partnership arrangements with ITE providers, especially if final practice trainees are hosted. After a settling period, and a judgement of secure practice, the mentor can plan some time out of the classroom. Releasing staff in-house is a great deal less costly than sending them on a course.

TAC; team around the community. Do you talk outside you school; at all levels? It is really important for a school to recognise the limits of the internal expertise, and, when shared, this will become a reality. It is also essential not to feel alone in the enterprise of developing the school. Schools will develop to the level of the best, but, if the best is not as good as the best elsewhere, how can that expertise be accessed?

If the school works within a cluster, or a local academy group or federation, the expertise in one establishment could be deployed or purchased into a receiving school, to mutual benefit. This could be in the form of twilight sessions, as per the earlier model, or it could be purchased release to model and discuss aspects of practice. This is good CPD for the person delivering also, as they move into a training role.

In attending a number of Saturday conferences, Pedagoo, TLT16 and #LearningFirst (Bath) it has struck me that teachers want to get better at their job. This might prove an appropriate model for some. The #teacher5aday group has organised, and organises weekend CPD "retreat".

There are many models that can begin to address development based on local expertise.

TOE; team of experts. How do you decide when you need a little extra? In some geographic areas, the availability of expertise may soon appear to be evaporated. At this point, or to make a significant impact on an aspect of school development, it may be opportune to buy in someone with acknowledged wider expertise. This could be from a local university, a local inspector, or one of the growing army of consultants. It is a case of "pay your money and take your chance". The brief needs to be clear and concise and the expert has to have the skills to deliver. There won't be many readers who have not sat through a training session that has not quite hit the mark.

Local clusters of schools, banding together, can create significantly greater budget for a one-off event, which may be much more cost effective.

When it comes down to it, though, there is a significant simplicity. **CPD is communicating the knowledge from someone with acknowledged expertise to others with a need to develop. Making some quality time to talk is therefore paramount.** This can start from sitting in a classroom with a cup of tea after school going through an idea with colleagues. It does need goodwill and teacher

involvement and ownership of their own need to identify and incorporate their training needs.

Learning to teach is a life-long need. There is always a need to accommodate to change, from a move to another year group, another school, or another curricular adjustment. Teachers need to remain learners. Learning should be a shared enterprise, or it could become three strikes and you're out, of date…

On professionalism and team work; food for thought

Teaching is a team game, relying on each member of the team for the whole to function effectively.

Team leader(s) have to recognise that their plans, vision and aspirations for the organisation will succeed or fall, depending on how they manage to get the best out of the rest of the team.

In a school setting, the leadership role is to ensure that the environment is conducive to maximising outcomes, to provide the best possible spaces for teaching and resources that enable the teacher and the learners to make best use of them.

The only real way forward is to see education as a whole as a giant team, all working to the same ends. Sadly, the constant fragmentation of the system, with schools pitted against each other rather mitigates against that ever happening.

Andy Hargreaves

- "What we want for our students we should want for our teachers: learning, challenge, support, and respect."
- "All teachers are already leaders. It's in the nature of teaching."
- "We must use collegiality not to level people down but to bring together their strength and creativity."
- "We will not achieve high performance in education if we replace teachers with machines or turn teachers into machines."

Developing personal virtuosity, through deliberate reflective practice.

Virtuosity depends on capability with the tools and significant mental and physical reflection and rehearsal.

CPD; a shared enterprise. Use your colleagues.

Knowing stuff

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, such was the need to train enough Primary teachers to replace the wartime and post-war trained cohort that minimum requirements to enter the Certificate of Education course was five good GCE passes, including maths and English. Where GCEs were taken largely by Grammar school attendees, the requirements took a proportion of the top 20% of learners. Some, today, may see this as a limited system, but, in life, occasionally "needs must".

However, as a Primary teacher, with enough GCEs to fill two hands, and a level study, together with a Cert Ed in Environmental Education, I had sufficient subject background to cover the whole Primary Curriculum. This was significantly added to with a great deal of voluntary in-service training and two periods of external study on Post Graduate level courses on Environmental Science and In Language and Reading Development. If I didn't know enough on a subject, I found out, just like every trainee with whom I work. It is part of the job.

For the whole of my teaching career, the underpinning of everything in schools has been knowledge.

While some commentators would wish to exaggerate some of the excesses of the 60s as archetypes of progressive practice, these were extremely rare and, working in a strong Local Authority, would have been addressed very rapidly. A large number of lessons were simply chalk and talk.

Class sizes in 1974-79 varied between 37 and 40. This was a time where Teaching Assistants were not an entity, helping mums occasionally came in to hear reading or perhaps some art support, and always to support off site trips. Technology was a single tape recorder. The highlight of 1976 was the arrival in my classroom of an overhead projector, which allowed some new things to be tried, with the advantage over the blackboard of facing the children.

In order to work effectively with such a large class, as well as whole class lessons, teachers used an integrated day, with four or five groups of children doing different subjects within a lesson, perhaps groups of eight doing maths, English (writing or reading activity), topic and art. This approach can be difficult to comprehend today. It did require a multi-dimensional approach to planning to ensure that each child received necessary teaching across different subjects. It is very easy to perceive as chaotic, but, in reality, it enabled small group teaching within a very large class, with those not working directly with the teacher actively working on continuous projects, topic subjects, writing extended narratives, art or perhaps some areas of practical maths, among many other areas.

As there was also an expectation that every child would be heard to read each week, with those in extra need three to five times a week, this had to be fitted into work practice. Adaptations included a regular home-school reading diary, which both home and school used to share thinking about reading. Every child also had a personal cassette tape and had time to sit and read aloud to themselves, wearing headphones, so that they could hear themselves while they read. They could also rewind and re-listen to themselves. Phonics were taught, practiced and checked, as were spellings, with personalised lists developed from 100/200 common words and personal errors in writing.

For those who may be perceiving this as discovery learning, I'd have to disabuse them of that, as every activity was teacher challenged. Any teacher who indulged in "discovery approaches" came up against colleagues who challenged the approach and the outcomes, especially if the approach meant your own class being disturbed or shared space being inappropriately used.

Library and non-fiction book activities were designed to explore texts to find information, to be shared or used to support developing displays. Topic glossaries were developed for themes, often displayed as "An alphabet of…" as a result of book research. Home tasks were often to extend the glossaries through discussion at home.

I came across a diagram from around 1976, during my time as coordinator for environmental studies, a great title covering all the topic based areas of the curriculum, pre National Curriculum. It allowed scope to consider the needs of the curriculum from the starting point of view of the child, seeking topics which would be both within the child's ability to comprehend, but also to present opportunities which would allow exploration at the child's level.

Put simply, classroom learning is children, context, engagement, guidance and adaptation, evaluation of outcomes. The whole captured within communication.

Remembering always the maxim that education(life) is a journey not a destination. (Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American essayist, poet, and leader of the Transcendentalist movement in the early nineteenth century.)

Curriculum "map" circa 1976

Curricula since the 1988 National Curriculum are usually written by experts, from the expert perspective, ensuring that information is delivered, whether or not it is appropriate for the learner's current needs. As teachers, unconstrained by predetermined curricular expectations, we were able to assume the mantle of experts, reflecting on what the four year olds brought with them in the way of life experiences which would be the start points for school based experiences and exploration.

So, for example, history started as "My story", based on storyboards created with a series of photos, then developed into His or Her story, with reference to parents and grandparents. Local walks to look at houses of interest started a link between History and Geography, with sketch mapping, drawing in situ or photos being taken (development time, much easier now?). Parents and grandparents came to tell their own stories, recorded onto c45, 60 or 90 tapes to be replayed and reflected upon. For homework, children were asked to telephone grandparents to ask a series of questions. Timelines were created throughout, so historical perspectives were constantly being

revisited, as knowledge was added. And we got back to the Victorians with photograph based family trees, together with the accompanying narrative.

Building materials might become the stuff of science and design technology, complemented by Lego or other construction material, as well as clay models of houses, made out of very small bricks, fired in the kiln. Trials with garden clay compared to the bought variety. One child brought in a tile found in their garden, which we took to the local museum to be told it was Roman. Visiting the local church we discovered even more tiles, being used as wall bricks and on the way back a local aunt offered the chance to have a look inside a house originally dating to 1580. I know, risk assessments, CRB etc. The Tudor context allowed exploration of timber as a building material. One idea often led to another, with settlements, including the Anglo-Saxon beginnings of the village being explored, with the support of the local history society.

In reality, what is a curriculum? It is a series of related contexts within which learners will enhance their understanding of the world in which they live, allowing opportunities for language acquisition, broadening communication, real contexts for writing and other recording. The mathematics of measures and data creation supported the core learning at every age. So the basics were the backbone of topic work. The contexts provided the creative structures into which the relevant subjects could be fitted. Asking questions and seeking answers were the basis for both library research and experiential science activity, which might be based on the notion of finding out interesting ideas to share with the rest. Every subject had value for what it brought to the child as thinking and learning opportunities. The art table was a permanent fixture within the classroom, with half a dozen children regularly interpreting information in picture form.

Those were the days.

A later construct that derived essentially from the earlier approaches, became a central element of the school teaching and learning policy when I was a headteacher.

Simplify to Amplify

This phrase came about in conversation when working with a School Direct trainee. It was clear in discussion that the trainee had a vision of what was needed in the lesson and that much pre-learning had occurred beforehand. The attempt to introduce several layers of knowledge backfired a little, as there was limited checking that the earlier knowledge had been sufficiently assimilated. The first phase of knowledge could be considered as "structural knowledge", in that it was akin to a series of folder headings that were to be used to log the later, more detailed, information. The idea was sound, but the execution, in less secure hands allowed some slippage.

In a world of knowledge, the supposedly knowledgeable will be queen or king. There is significantly more knowledge today than when I started school. One only has to look at the current year 6 SATs to see that significantly more is being demanded than when I took the 11 plus back in 1964. Equally, the curriculum is organised in such a way that knowledge is the most significant factor.

Information is still available through print, but now also at the click of a button, on a tablet, PC or smart phone. There is so much information that reflecting on it, distilling it and even considering it's worth can take valuable time. It is very easy, for an interested teacher, to discover a world of facts on any subject that can be shared with the children.

It is very easy for children to face a sea of facts and not to know what to do with them.

My first wife came from a farming family. There was an apocryphal story told about one youngster going to school. The teacher, knowing the farming background, prepared some flash cards with pictures of animals, to support the learning of early words, such as cow, pig, horse, chicken and pig. As the teacher turned over the flash cards, the other children happily answered with pig, chicken, horse, until it was N's turn and the cow picture was placed on the table. It elicited no response. The teacher was astonished. "You see these every day, N, you must know what it is." "Well, I can see that there's some Hereford in there, but, can't decide what it's been crossed with." Out of the mouths of babes, etc. Nearly five years of farm experience had instilled a great deal of detailed knowledge; considerably more than was expected and probably more than the teacher at that stage.

Pre-school children encounter knowledge in a haphazard way, often dictated by family circumstance, sometimes, more organised through attending a pre-school experience. If you live in a family that takes weekend walks into different environments, camps, goes on holidays, visits museums, galleries and other places of interest and all the while talking about what is being seen in nominal, descriptive and questioning terms, it is highly likely that these children will have a language advantage and be capable communicators as well as explorers, even at a young age.

Young children enjoy sharing what they have learned. "Did you know that…?" can promote a conversation that, in itself, becomes an opportunity to insert additional information, or offer a new strand for the child to consider. It is likely to be tuned to the evident need and interest of the child. Effectively, the adult gives to the child what they ask for.

School is usually different, in that while there is the mantra that "learning is not linear", information, or knowledge is more often presented in a linear manner, lesson by lesson, week by week, term by term. Topics are ascribed to year groups, which might, in itself, dictate the level of knowledge being

disseminated.

Processing the volume of information that is offered during the course of one day can cause some difficulty, with some slippage between lessons. The process of learning, therefore, has to run hand in hand with the knowledge, so that each child can have the chance to keep up with peers.

Education has never been a simple act of tell, remember, test, as long as I can remember. Even in classrooms that would have been described as "traditional", there was considerable dialogue, often led by the teacher, but also facilitated discussion between peers. This discussion opened up avenues that enabled the teacher to add information into the discussion that was relevant and kept the thinking flowing. As a result, we learned the processes of learning, so that independent activities, such as homework, could be attempted with confidence.

In many ways, what this describes to me is the value of interaction and the relationships between the teacher/coach and learners. To be able to "infiltrate" a discussion, as an active participant, rather than purely as a leader, is a particular skill, in order to understand the nature of the discussion, to pick up the group position and to be able to add information of worth, without providing a diversion. Teaching requires a variety of approaches, which have to be honed in practice, in so doing, in the hands of an experienced teacher almost intuitive.

This is sometimes difficult for an inexperienced observer to unpick, even for the teacher to explain. The outcome can appear effortless and seamless, but will have been the product of multiple layers of rapid thought, leading to timely action.

Teaching, at heart, is knowing stuff, the developmental process underpinning the knowledge and having the skills to get it across, in ways that the learners can accommodate, to assimilate and be able to act on their new knowledge. It is a communicative act, engaging minds, linking with earlier understandings, adding to or altering these, so that, after the period of thought, some change has been wrought that we might call learning, a change of state.

Putting these interactions in order is a series of lessons which require the planning of a scheme of work, a medium term, or a topic plan. Into each, the teacher injects the appropriate next step being sought. As there is always so much knowledge that can be incorporated, it is sometimes the case that teachers fill the available time with their available knowledge, whether useful at that point, or not. In so doing, they may well be in danger of wasting learner time, which is needed for reflection and assimilation.

Returning to what has been covered is essential, as revision, perhaps as simple check tests, but also within successive challenges that seek to allow learners to demonstrate their learned knowledge and skill. The mark scheme, or success criteria for the activity will act as a scaffolding of expectation.

Planning learning needs to reflect on learning need over different timescales enabling concentration on the lesson in hand as the dynamics of the year have been considered.

The National Curriculum falls into topics, which, as a school, we developed as topic specifications that, when placed end to end, formed the whole school curriculum map, so every teacher knew the essence of what they had to cover. Some practitioners now seek to call these knowledge organisers. Many of these are teachers of English who are identifying the knowledge that the children will require to understand the narrative from a period of history, or within a geographic or scientific

context. In Primary, this can enable high quality cross curricular linking, if it is planned to do so, with the knowledge just slightly ahead of the reading, the literature has a firmer bed of understanding within which to develop.

It is worth considering planning at different levels, too, the management need and that of the teacher going into the classroom to teach. These needs are different. Management needs to know that the overall planning has been done, that ensures the curriculum for the year group has been covered.

In my preferred planning model, this is done, as an annual plan, in late June/July, perhaps in a day closure or cancelled staff meetings, before the start of the next academic year. This is the simplicity, from which amplification occurs.

The next level of planning is a composite, in that the medium term plan is an overview of more detailed intentions, for the curriculum, with necessary awareness of anticipated learner needs. The autumn term plans were created on the second Friday of the autumn term, during a closure, after a "settling" project enabled the teachers to get to know their children as well as possible after the holiday.

Teacher day to day plans are aides memoire, and can be as complex or as simple as the teacher requires in order to create the best possible lesson and each lesson may require a teacher to think and plan differently. A prepared format can inhibit their thinking. However, should there be evidence that lessons are not planned, leading to poorer learner performance, formalising the process is usually an easy option.

A teacher needs the clarity of a stand up performer, to go into each lesson with the essential lesson structure that can then be moulded through interactions with the audience responses, in order to ensure that every interaction has purpose and a positive outcome. The simplicity of the storyline is amplified through the integration of an enhanced vocabulary/knowledge in response to evident awareness and need, adding value to the sum of learning.

It is the gentle teasing of the threads that ensures the warp and weft of weaving that supports learning over time. Each child's life is different, so poor working on the warp and weft may have created small holes which may require attention, the job of the teacher, acting as a learning coach.

Of course, like all weaving, if threads are pulled too tightly, they will knot, or may well unravel.

HOME

Pre-school experiences, home and external

Continuing extra-curricular life experiences, clubs, trips, people, work

Personal starter toolkit of knowledge and skills

Children known well throughout school

Enriching school curriculum for every child

Personal learning- targets- aspirations- sporting, academic goals and achievements. Academic challenge and support

Lead, guide, coach, mentor, support, sustain.

Ready for Employment, training or education and LIFE.

Attitude, Aptitude, Concentration, Resilience

Impact of internal school structures, such as assessment, differentiation and setting/streaming.

Constantly building personal capacity

Intervention

Homework

Continuing life experiences, family, friends, extended family; opportunities, availability, capacity

Knowing stuff

Classroom learning is children, context, engagement, guidance and adaptation, evaluation of outcomes.

The whole is captured within high quality communication.

Education(life) is a journey not a destination. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Teaching, at heart, is knowing stuff, the developmental process underpinning the knowledge and having the skills to get it across, in ways that the learners can accommodate, to assimilate and be able to act on their new knowledge.

It is a communicative act, engaging minds, linking with earlier understandings, adding to or altering these, so that, after the period of thought, some change has been wrought that we might call learning, a change of state.

Returning to what has been covered is essential, as revision, perhaps as simple check tests, but also within successive challenges that seek to allow learners to demonstrate their learned knowledge and skill.

In Primary, high quality cross curricular linking, if it is planned to do so, with the knowledge just slightly ahead of the reading, means that literature has a firmer bed of understanding within which to develop.

Order and Organisation

I have begun to wonder if technology, while making some elements of life easier over time, have actually made some elements of teacher life harder.

An example of this would be planning.

Whereas, as a classroom teacher, my planning was handwritten in a hard back notebook, for me, as an aide memoire, today teachers may be asked to fill in an electronic proforma, with boxes designed to inform someone in a management role that certain aspects have been considered and often written in considerable detail. I would concentrate on the bigger picture, of the essential knowledge to be shared and particular needs of children to be considered, whereas now, I often see plans as scripts, developed from an earlier medium term plan. It is possible to think that teachers are being asked to over-plan.

This was an element that exercised me throughout my time as a headteacher, as I was aware that I needed to strike the right balance between my need to know what was going on in the school, in order to be party to and to be able to share the overall narrative, while at the same time, safeguarding the well-being of staff and ensuring that they had sufficient thinking time to develop practice.

The only way to take charge of this is to operate within different levels of interlocking organisation, starting at school level.

The curriculum was clearly developed within a planning structure with different timescales developed that enabled quality time for thinking; extended later.

In essence, the whole was based on

Every topic being developed as a "specification" that detailed the essential knowledge that underpinned the learning as well as the anticipated range of outcomes across a mixed ability class, based on capabilities developed from "level descriptors".

Topics lasted as long as needed, not allowed to expand to fill a half term/term. There was flexibility to link topics where a teacher saw creative benefits. This allowed for subtly different interpretations each year.

An annual plan for each year group (see below), covering all subjects in outline, was developed on a July closure, before the new academic year, ensuring a positive start in September.

First two weeks in September given to a teacher topic to get to know the children well.

The second Friday of the September term given to admin for the year and time to develop a detailed overview of the remainder of the half terms' plans, based on good understanding of children's needs. A copy came to me.

Teacher short term and daily plans were personal, in any form that supported their teaching.

Teachers met with parents in week 3 or 4 in September to share the year plan and to share ways in which they might help their children during the year.

The school overall plans ensured that high demand times for teachers, such as report writing, February and June/July, were not subject to high demand training or meeting schedules.

Knowing that specific information is required at specific times allowed teachers to organise their own diaries to ensure that this was done, in so doing reducing the need to chase staff and add to pressure, or for management to be seen as over-demanding.

Knowing ahead of time that certain topics would be covered enabled library book exchange to ensure that there was sufficient stock available to support research, that high demand on some equipment could be managed and that necessary stock items could be ordered in time.

Good structural organisation also enabled quality thinking time to be planned and funded, so that development time could be focused and more effective, both in creation and dissemination of projects. Occasional slippage, caused by staff absence, or an unexpected eventuality, as can easily occur in school, could be managed more easily.

Reading.

Using a well ordered colour coded reading system allowed staff to enable children to have free access to books for changing, maintaining interest and motivation. With guided reading books at teaching/challenge level, home books were at a colour below, so a greater fluency level meant children could read them for themselves.

A high quality reading curriculum has benefits across the whole curriculum, so deserves to be centre stage. It is often the prescribed, often narrowing approaches that get in the way.

Phonics is a central element of learning to decode words and is an important component among many that contribute to accuracy. In and of itself, it does not necessarily develop fluency, nor enjoyment, nor meaning and comprehension, with children engaging in reading for pleasure, creating their own reading dynamic. It is a tool and like any tool, needs to be handled well at the right time.

Every Primary teacher is a teacher of English, or reading and writing. I have always found the following a useful tool for reflection.

TEN SIGNS OF A SUCCESSFUL (ENGLISH) TEACHER
(Exeter University; Primary Improvement Project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust 1997)

This project looked at learning dynamics within reading classes and found the following:-

- **A high level of personal enthusiasm for literature, often supplementing the school's resources with their own books.**

- Good professional **knowledge of children's authors** and teaching strategies

- Importance of literacy stressed within a **rich literacy environment**

- **Progress celebrated** publicly and **children's confidence increased**

- Teaching **individualised and matched to pupil's ability** and reading interests

- **Systematic monitoring and assessment**

- Regular and **varied reading activities**

- Pupils encouraged to **develop independence and autonomy**, attacking unfamiliar words, or teachers backing pupils' judgment as authors

- A **high quality of classroom management** skill and **personal relationships** with pupils

- **High expectations**, **children striving** to reach a high standard, whatever their circumstances

It is a truism, but a teacher usually prefaces any commentary with "in my experience". This is largely because teachers will always seek to develop high quality practice which a) suits their children and b) suits their way of thinking and thereby develop a coherent, working practice. So much of what I write is based on experience.

Learning to read should be based on a whole school approach, to ensure that children pass through different classes, but still are enabled to make steady progress. This can be based on trialling methodologies, with evaluation and feedback to develop others.

I started teaching so long ago that it was almost the dark ages for reading. The book stock in the school was limited and based on the Ginn 360 scheme, which gave a progression, so weekends and holidays were spent rummaging in charity shops to build up a personal class collection which would support the broader range of needs. The prevailing advice from inspectors was that some must be individually heard daily, some at least three times and the better readers at least once. With a class of 39 children that created a need for a lot of reading time. An integrated day, child-centred approach afforded some time, while playtimes and lunchtimes offered more. USSR, Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading happened straight after lunch, sometimes, but not often becoming ERIC, Everyone Reading in Class. Now, it is not uncommon to hear the word DEAR, drop everything and read. Parent helpers were always welcomed.

Phonics were taught, either directly to specific groups of children or within games situations. Approaches were multisensory, with sand trays, sandpaper shapes, plastic models, painting letters while saying out loud.

At the same time personalised sight vocabularies were being checked, developed and supported with spellings home and regular tests. Spelling was based on the look, cover, write and check approach, developing aspects of short term memory. **Children learned to read and to gain pleasure from reading.**

Cliff Moon's Individualised Reading approach effectively colour coded the available reading schemes into bands within a defined readability level, from approximately age 5, rising by 6 months for each colour.

stage 0 red; stage 1 yellow; stage 2 white; stage 3 dark blue; stage 4 pink; stage 5 brown; stage 6 green; stage 7 grey; stage 8 orange; stage 9 black; stage 10 beige; stage 11 dark pink; stage 12 pale blue.

If **each colour was stocked with sufficient books**, this allowed free access to children to **change books as and when they finished them**, rather than waiting for a defined change time. It allowed teachers to allow considerable access to reading material, at an appropriate level, which enabled them to work on their fluency, through a variety of means of reading aloud; to each other, to their parents, into a recording device.

Where guided reading was incorporated into practice, these books were chosen at a challenge level, within a known colour, so that children could choose from any level below for personal reading.

Home-school reading record books became all-purpose reading records and comment books, shared by teachers and parents, with comments made at the time of hearing a child read. Individualised reading records were kept.

The colour coded approach created an understandable spine, with defined progression embedded. It allowed consideration of the different needs of readers, in that where a child needed some guidance within a book in order to be able to read it, defined a teaching level book. All books below this would be fluent level books, while any book above the guided level was probably at a frustration level. For reading at home, children could select from their fluent colours, changeable daily if needed. Inevitably, the movement from one teaching level to another determined the books read at home, so there was an element of competition engendered, as well as a desire to be seen to be making progress.

Guiding teachers, children and parents within these books was **achieved through bookmarks** which had been written with a specific level in mind. Based on a "can do" approach, the statements, linked to NC levels were given to encourage conversation between reader and listener. Colour coded to link with the books being read, they had an appreciable impact.

Beyond and around the spine, other books were available. Children took home a non-fiction book each week within their library exchange period. "Free reader" was the ultimate accolade, when self-selection from the available books required different guidance and knowledge from the teacher of the available texts. Non-fiction texts were displayed within the topic corner, available for reading, but also for study skill lessons, using the books to enhance the literacy curriculum, through note taking and information gathering. The index and contents offered opportunities for alphabetical order and judgements about suitability of the text.

Free readers need the skills of choosing a book for themselves. To facilitate this, children were taught the "five finger" rule; read the first page and fold one finger for each word that caused a problem. If five were counted, it's probably too difficult. They also had to read the blurb to support their decision, made in discussion with the teacher. Children also had the (adult) right to say that they were not enjoying a book.

Children learned to read and enjoyed the process, in doing so becoming avid readers.

By now the reader will have noticed a theme developing.

- A good **range of reading material** should be available, organised to support progress. Colour coded?

- **Teacher awareness** of individual reading abilities and interests is essential.

- **The reading journey** should be guided and supported as well as personal practice and a dynamic that encouraged sharing books as widely as possible.

- **Adult engagement** with different aspects; diagnostic if necessary, such as miscue analysis and developmental feedback, written records of books read and qualitative statements of reading. Consider a home-school diary.

- Reading **between guided sessions** is essential to fluency.

Supported reading development.

- Analyse and identify the current reading level of each child.
- Select the appropriate level of bookmark to support progress.
- Introduce the colour range or suggested booklist and alternatives.
- Self-select, if appropriate, with "five-finger" rule applied.
- Regular, at least weekly, teacher or adult/child engagement- supporting formative assessment. Hear reader for fluency and accuracy, discussion, **targets for interim period** eg read to end of chapter…or page …
- Fluent reading book, at least two nights with an adult.
- Home-school reading record.
- Review of progress.

Develop a culture of reading in the class.

- **Create a book corner** which actively encourages engagement.

- "**Author of the month**"; a collection of books by one author, to be read and then followed up.

- **Postcards to an author**; Fold A4 in half; Side one, a pictorial interpretation of the book, side two a postcard commentary, aimed at the author.

- **Letters to an author**, alive or dead; Commentary instead of formal book review.

Display potential

- **Reading walls,** considering an audience. Potential for home activity?

- Photocopy book covers. **Speech bubble commentary** from children.

Read this book because…………

- I LOVE books

- **Wordsmiths.** Ten interesting words I have found in ……….(book title)

- Settings, characters. **Descriptions into art, art into words**.

- Settings in a box. 3D theatres allowing story telling, possibly animation.

- **Storyboarding** a book. A book as a **5 picture cartoon**.

Parents as reading partners

Where parents are considered as partners within this process, there is no guarantee that they will all have a clear understanding of expectations, nor can it be assumed that every child goes home to a literate household.

Schools need to be aware of this dynamic, to avoid stress either to the child or the parents. Support and help may be needed and, where there is limited scope for support, this may need to be the focus for in-school intervention, such as additional TA time for reading.

Where schools have developed parent evenings specifically devoted to reading guidance and repeated this over time with an assurance that every parent participated, the impact on reading progress is often very impressive.

Writing. Order and organisation was developed in the approach to writing, with books developed as personal organisers. This allowed teachers to interact with individuals with a known agenda for development. It supported dialogue and written feedback, so marking became more focused to need, so had greater impact.

The holistic approach which focuses on the writing process, allowed editing and improvement at the core.

Towards structure in writing (a two-page approach)

The principles of a two-page approach to writing can be relatively simply put.

• The first page of an exercise book is left blank potentially to act as an ongoing contents list.

• If blank paper exercise books are used, differentially supportive writing frames can be created to be used underneath as writing guidelines.

• If writing targets are on a fold out sheet pasted to the front or back of the exercise book, so that they can be opened out while writing occurs, the whole constitutes a working document. Targets can be extracted for each task and an ongoing development commentary recorded.

• Subsequent two page spreads are the basis for the development of further writing with clear, ongoing developmental targets. Each is a project in its own right.

The left hand page is designated as a planning and ideas gathering page, with children encouraged to draft all their thoughts connected with the writing purpose.

Ideas can be explored through a variety of considered approaches
• Brainstorming
• Ideas webs
• Mind mapping
• Lists
• Useful phrases
• Story frames
• Structured pictures or storyboarding
• Story lines or timelines
• Difficult or interesting words
• Etc

Many of these will be used intermittently to suit specific purposes.
Some lend themselves to further exploration with regard to story structure, especially with ideas such as sentences and paragraphs.

Scaffolds for writing allow development of these concepts on the left hand page.

Examples might incude:-

Initial stage Picture area
Associated words Single sentence

Storyboarding can also be used as talk prompts for younger children

Picture	Key words as prompts for storytelling or sentences
Beginning	1,2,3,4 words 1,2,3,4 sentences
Middle	
End	

Writing planner

Story title or writing theme e.g. science task, based on order and organisation of ideas.

Paragraph theme	Key words for each paragraph, or story board pictures	5 "paragraphs" Discuss paragraph conventions to be used, when appropriate.
Introduction Scene setting Characters		**1,2,3,4 etc sentences per paragraph, embedding differential challenge and expectation.**
Connective words Development		
Main action Speech?		
Resolution of conflicts		
Conclusion and closing reflections		

Writing time line, useful for reports, order in writing

Arrow stories or connected ideas, e.g. in reporting a timeline visit

```
┌─────────────┐      ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────┐      ┌────────────────┐
│ Storyboard  │      │          │      │          │      │                │
│ Pictures    │  ──▶ │          │ ──▶  │          │ ──▶  │                │
│ Words       │      │          │      │          │      │                │
│ Ideas       │      └──────────┘      └──────────┘      │                │
│ Sentences   │                                          └────────────────┘
└─────────────┘

            SUDDENLY!
            Element of
            Surprise!
```

Any of these ideas can be incorporated into the left hand ideas page and can be replicated on the right hand page as appropriate for first drafts, although older children will be encouraged to use the blank sheet and to be organised in their approach.

The left hand page can also be useful for teacher intervention:-
Adding conversation notes or feedback

Supporting spelling development

Drafting and editing are essential elements of this process, with children taking more responsibility for this aspect of their writing production.

All the above are capable of being developed within presentational activities, with ICT skills embedded.

The right hand page becomes the first draft page, with the potential for development and second drafting on a separate blank sheet of paper, which is then placed over the left hand page, to ensure that the child has a clear view of what is being copied and developed. This draft can then be glued along the left hand edge and stuck over the first draft, developing a clear developmental story of progress.

Moving to a single book for writing

We had developed the two page approach to capturing the writing process, linked with flip out personal targets, but still wanted to ensure that, at transition points, there was no drop in expectation, as was evident in a couple of year groups. We were especially concerned at the Infant-Junior point. The classic statement was occasionally heard, level 3 in Junior is not the same as in Infants, full stop.

This could enable lower expectations to become embedded, so was tackled by **taking the writing books from the previous year, to continue their use into the next year,** thereby establishing the earlier benchmark as the starting expectation. It also meant that the receiving teacher could not

ignore the professional decisions of the previous colleague, as evidence was continuous.

Following this, we took account of the volume of writing that the children were doing, across the range of subjects and surmised that, if they did less of more quality that writing outcomes would improve. The hypothesis was propounded that because, at that time, there were books for several subjects, the imperative to have evidence in each was driving the writing dilemma. The solution was to have three exercise books, one for maths, one for written work and one for "topic notes", for want of a better descriptor. They also had an art sketch book.

The two page approach, grown out of the National Writing Project ideals, embeds note making, ordering ideas, collecting vocabulary, among many other, process based elements, so we were happy with that approach. Drafting and redrafting, with an audience in mind, perhaps public display or a class compilation in book form. Making books, story, topic and records was a feature of school life.

So, as a result, every area of the curriculum could become the focus for writing during the week. A piece of art work, DT, PE activity, class visit or science experience could be written up as an appropriate narrative report, a set of instructions or an evaluation. Preparatory activities ahead of trips, or responses after, could provide the vehicles for letter writing, to a specific audience. We found that every aspect of school experience could lend itself to a range of writing experiences, well beyond anything that was ever thought of in a purely literacy framework.

The writing process, as a result, became an even stronger aspect of school life, with teachers deciding what should be developed through drafting to presentation forms for display, or some other presentation. Dialogue about improvements, based on personal targets, enabled individuals to take some responsibility for their efforts and outcomes.

Quality of writing and presentation improved. It was a case of narrow the focus, but improve the progressive "baselines".

Notes (all writings) were kept, and stuck into the left hand page to show how the thinking had developed throughout. Photocopies were kept to a minimum, as was the use of the wipe on wipe off boards, but, if they were used, they would be copied. How much of children's work is "lost" as the early drafts are wiped clean. If they produce something, it should be shown to have value.

A holistic approach to the writing process, captured within one book, transferred to the next class, supports writing progress, through interrogation of outcomes. In other words, a personal portfolio.

Moving from one book to becoming personal organisers of learning need.

Seeking personalised approaches to support each child's learning journey can be a key to supporting needs at the extremes of abilities. Blank page books enable differential writing guide lines to be used beneath. The idea of flip out memory joggers can be very supportive of learning dialogue across a wide area of need.

As a classteacher, and often as a teaching headteacher, one of the difficulties was remembering the personal needs of each child in the class across the range of subjects. Over time, a variety of aides memoire came into being, such as personal bookmarks to highlight reading needs.

Flip out personal targets were joined to the edge of the exercise books, so that they could be available to the child and me at any point, including when giving feedback or marking, when the focus was very much clearer. As children got older, they began to point out where they had achieved, so this was recorded and new foci created.

If generic reminders are needed of spelling and grammar (SPaG) rules, these can be on another flip out card.

Specific spellings which cause the child a problem can be highlighted on another card, or topic specific words can be developed, so that they are more regularly used.

Working in this way, the exercise book becomes a personal organiser surrounding the central need to focus on and improve writing, at whatever age. Card supports can be made for any purpose and, to be effective, should be personal.

Where "word walls" exist in class, consider the potential for a table top 100 word dictionary, to be available the learners in front of them, so that they can check and reproduce common words accurately. Short term memory can be supported, of the child is trained to use look, cover, write and check, for all these words.

Children asking for spellings can cause a problem, so a solution might be using small wipe-on-wipe-off boards, to have a go, to hold up for adults to check and intervene as needed.

Holistic approaches within a school enables a clarity of narrative at child, parent, teacher and school level, ensuring that everyone has an idea of direction of travel that is as clear as possible.

Unpicking the analyse-plan-do-review-record cycle.

Seeking adaptability in lessons as a result of more dynamic planning approaches.

Planning for learning will always be an issue for teachers, in that there are multiple layers of responsibility to be contained within the plan. However, planning is the bedrock of the order and organisation that enables a teacher to run a successful class and a head to run a successful school. The ultimate in planning allows a teacher to move towards personalised approaches, allowing individual children to have their needs accommodated. There are significant links with project management, and it is no surprise that earlier incarnations of thematic work were called projects. The sadness was that these projects sometimes came to an abrupt end due to time pressures, lack of resources or some other shortfall.

Teachers and schools have a number of variables to consider in planning, learning contexts, use of space, resources of all types, time, as well as the individual learning and emotional needs of the children. A good knowledge of the curriculum is essential, as well as a clear understanding of the potential of ICT to support learning. If any of these variables are not considered, learning can be unsuccessful, i.e. poorly structured topic, lack of appropriate space, table or floor, limited resources or poor accessibility, inadequate time available for development and completion. If the children's

needs are not respected, many may not make progress.

There are current debates about whether the curriculum should be built from the needs of the children or whether it is better to define the contexts within which children will learn. The Rose and Cambridge reviews suggested learning within domains, rather than subjects. It seems to be the case that current Government thinking errs towards retention of subjects and knowledge. Either way the learning context for the children and whether they cover a sufficiently broad curriculum will ultimately be determined by their teacher.

Most schools plan at different timescales, whole school, annual plans, medium term (1-6 weeks) and then teacher short term plans. A great deal of planning will have gone into the stage of the teacher planning a lesson. Teachers worry most about short-term planning and some schools demand significant detail at that point, which creates a very heavy bureaucratic workload to create something that is ultimately a teacher aide memoire.

There is a strong argument for allowing the short term plans to be determined by the teacher, if the medium term plans are strong guides, but with the fall-back position that plans would be required if the teaching required improvement. For many teachers, a reflective log book would be sufficient; in fact I have met teachers whose schools require specific short term plans, which the teacher then reinterprets to be easily accessible. Are short term plans any use if they do not help short term cover teachers to be able to pick up exactly what is needed?

If planning included plans for marking, then workload issues could be examined more clearly.

Summary diagram of learning and teaching policy

Overview school plans provide a level of confidence for a school in knowing that there is a baseline of curriculum coverage. These can be created as an amalgam of the plans for each year group as a school map. It is important for the school to interpret National documentation to specify the parameters of the subject areas and the depth of study within the subject in order for the school to

be able to demonstrate curriculum coverage, as well as an intention to develop and deepen the children's study skills.

The value of overview planning should not be underestimated. A broad view of any journey is useful to ensure that, even if there is some tangential deviation from the original plan, there is clarity to the ultimate goals. Where planning is based on short term goal setting, it may not be possible to achieve the further goals within the timescales allowed.

Planning for Teaching and Learning

Analyse → Plan → Do → Review → Record → Report

	Long term planning	Medium term planning	Short term planning	
National level Agreed curriculum National Curriculum Frameworks	School level Interpret as schemes of work, with specifics of content and approaches for each subject	Year group level	Teacher personal planning To consider:- resourcing, timetabling, differentiated tasks allocation of support	
	Annual Plans to show coverage for each year group	English development Mathematics development Topic development	specific teaching points interpreted to board WALT/WILF clear expectations	Engagement with children as learners Oral feedback Work marked to criteria Developmental feedback Diagnoses Recording Reporting
	Children's tracking records	Group/individual based expectations of progress in year- group education plan and individualised targets, inc IEPs		
	Where is the class going this year? Areas for study	Where is the class going this term? What is the expectation of each group?	Where is the learning going this week/today? Best task for each ability group?	Update records Annotated examples to file

Annual planning for each class, as an overview of learning and teaching areas, ensures that a teacher knows the general dynamics of the year, based on known topic areas in each subject. Teachers can have confidence in knowing the direction of each term, so that each topic block can be the proper focus for learning without having to be thinking of the next one as a whole. The use of an annual plan can also allow learning needs to be progressive, so that the benefits of one piece of learning can have an impact on subsequent learning, or be recombining the topics, teachers can creatively link subject areas within purposeful cross-curricular themes. The example given shows the linking of curriculum areas to the benefit of learning as a whole, while still allowing those areas that cannot be linked to have a discrete place.

ANNUAL PLAN FOR YEAR GROUP   Year 4   TEACHER _____

TIME SCALE WEEKS	TOPIC TITLE	LEAD SUBJECT: H,G,Sc,DT	MATHS – practical opportunities	ENGLISH	IT **	DT (support-RC)	ART	RE	MUSIC (RW)	PE HCC (Indoor) (PG)	SCHEME Games/ Swimming
2.5 4/9-19/9	Story Maps	English/Art	Place value Money/+ -	Story planning Chronology & setting/poetry	Keyboard skills Save/print	Poetry scrolls	Story maps - pencil	Trees		Balance	Football
5 22/9-24/10	Insulators/ Conductivity. Forces/Elect.	Science	Measures Shape & space X +	Recount/letter Narrative order Character dev.	Word Art Power point Roamer	Design and make 'unique'	Pen & wash Pastels				Hockey
1 3/11-7/11	Habitats: Autumn/ Winter	Science	money / data	*Alphabetically ordered/information text	Clip Art Dig.cam scanner	3D shadow box	*Close observational drawing	Angels		Dance	
4 10/11-5/12	Space/ Light/ Sound	Science	Fractions/dec + - Time	Book reviews Onomatopoeic poetry. Instructions	Power point		Colour mixing/ shading				
2 8/12-19/12	Angels at Christmas	RE		Reports/ articles	word art			Christ's teachings Paschal candle		Gym- height/ changes	Basket ball
6 5/1-13/2	Roman Britain	History	Place value, + - money/measures Shape & space	Historical stories – playscripts/debate Viewpoint/poetry	CD	Food tech. Marble maze	3D paper sculptures- helmets				
1 23/2-27/2	Habitats: Spring	Science	Number: properties & reasoning	*Alphabetically ordered/information text	Dig.cam - import		*Close observational drawing			Dance changes	Athletics
4 1/3-26/3	Materials: Changes/ classifying	Science	X +, money Checking results Handling data	Instructions Report –Non chronological	Dig.cam recording graphs	Textiles- Design & make	Textures/ Rubbings/ Tone/line collage				
1 29/3-2/4	Easter	RE	Fractions and decimals	Poetry		Food tech.					
3 19/4-7/5	Plant growth/ Human skeleton	Science	Data (topic) Place value + - Money	Information/ explanation text – Posters	Textease/ graphics	Food tech- Healthy eating	Watercolour Tone/line Clay figures				Swimming
1 10/5-14/5	Habitats: Summer	Science	Measures Handling data	*Alphabetically ordered/information	graphs		*Close ob. drawing				
4 (over ½ term) 17/5-18/6	Rivers	Geography	Shape & space Number/x + Money Fractions/dec	Persuasive writing. Posters/factfile Explanation Story :dilemmas	Map skills Power point	Design & make – simple chassis/axle	Colour mixing				
4.5 21/6-22/7	Havant to India	Geography	+ - time	Story/Poetry : different cultures Leaflets	Textease graphics	Food tech.	Printing			Dance: Rivers	
Working range of group - NC Levels- as at 1ˢᵗ September. 1-4				** Internet/whiteboard/word processing/laptop use- on-going							

Medium term planning. There is no absolute definition of medium term planning, except that it is neither long term, nor short term. It can therefore mean anything from two to six to ten weeks. Many teachers have become locked into half term blocks as their medium term planning. The longer the medium term, the more compromised can be personalised target setting for children's progress, unless there is a more regular update of these. Medium term planning is a means of describing the learning journeys of children over a timescale, across the curriculum.

In the annual plan shown, there was a clear intention by the teacher to use the first two and a half weeks of the year to establish the expectations within story writing, using the two page approach to writing (see descriptor), to get the children into certain ways of working and thinking. Poetry, art and ICT were closely linked to the process. The remainder of the curriculum during that period was described within more discrete subjects.

In this school, every subject area had a clear descriptor, a specification, of each of the subjects in the planner, so teachers knew what to teach and had suggestions as to how to teach the subject, based on previous experiences with the topic. The essence of the curriculum planning was topic, for interest and engagement, English, within every subject, and mathematics, where it was practical and useful, with DT, ICT and Art being used as support subjects to provide breadth of experience and exploration. Music and RE would occasionally be linked, but would also be developed separately. Aspects of PE and Music were also taken by experts as part of teacher PPA time.

Learning is a dynamic entity. Children should be presented with challenging opportunities with which they can engage. The best situations allow them some independence in decision making, identifying for themselves areas where they need to address a skill or knowledge shortage, thus leading to bespoke intervention. The National Curriculum as it currently stands makes very clear

statements of this intention, describing both the contexts for learning and the expectation of learners.

National Curriculum extract statements

rich and varied **contexts**   **enjoyment** of, and commitment to, **learning**

build on pupils' **strengths**, interests and experiences   confidence in **their capacity to learn**

work **independently and collaboratively**   **personal response** to a range of experiences and ideas

sense of identity

pupils acquire, develop and apply a **broad range** of knowledge, understanding and skills

think creatively and critically

to **solve problems**   **become creative**, innovative, enterprising and capable of leadership

develop physical skills   pursue a **healthy** lifestyle   keep themselves and others safe

spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Short term planning is that which a teacher takes into the classroom in order to effectively be able to run the class during the day, or for the week. There are various strategies employed for this. Some teachers now plan for the early part of the week, leaving the planning for Thursday and Friday to be able to cater for the outcomes of the earlier teaching and learning. Personal planning needs to take account of the resources needed for T&L, the space available to accommodate that learning, the time allocated to the fulfilling of the task and the deployment of any additional adults.

Moving towards personalisation, over the medium term, is often a very challenging aspect of a teacher's thinking, in that it brings together the three dimensional aspects of planning. Whereas the curriculum aspects are linear, simply fitting subject blocks into a timeline, personalisation of the curriculum demands a detailed knowledge of each individual child. That can be accomplished in stages, utilising differentiation by outcome in the early stages, to establish ability levels more succinctly, in order to tailor tasks that provide challenge. Initial sifting will allow a generalised grouping by general ability, into perhaps four or five groups, e.g. level 5,4,3,2,1. If the capabilities of each group can be described with care, tasks can be set to validate these judgements. If within each group the range can be described, personalised challenge can be presented as individualised "progress ladders" based on the next few learning targets. Alternatively teachers can state the individualised expectation of specific children. An example might be the top or bottom of the ability group. Challenge is the key to educational success and the progress of individuals leads to progress across the class.

Task setting for differential challenge is the next layer of consideration. Tasks need to match the learning needs of the group of children, so differentiation is the key element. The challenge for a level five child in a class will be significantly more challenging than that for a level one child, in terms of complexity of tasking, but also potentially in the presentation of the task to the child and the

necessary support. The former may be given an investigation with personal decision making embedded, whereas the latter may require step by step guidance from a knowledgeable other, with differential reading challenge provided by a larger font size. Time allowed needs to be carefully planned.

Task setting in this way is the ultimate end of teaching and learning. The original analyses of children's abilities and the curriculum context have been refined into a clear plan of action, which is then embedded into classroom practice. The outcomes are reviewed, notice taken of anomalies and adjustments made to subsequent learning challenges. This approach to the planning process embeds the assessment knowledge at the beginning of the learning process, as it provides the background to challenge and target setting, dictates the expectations within the learning activity and the means of engaging the children, through potentially differential input or presentation and questioning. It also guides the intervention strategy of the teacher, as (s)he engages with the learning expectations, offering support or additional challenge as necessary to refine or redefine the activity.

Modelling the decision making cycle of teaching and learning, in line with teacher professional standards.

Planning is never easy, but in this case it is the means by which children of all abilities are supported to make progress in learning. Try unpicking and describing your own classroom practice. That's not always easy either!

Just for information, here's an outline planning document for ITE students, which focuses on the dynamic elements rather than the script.

Focus of lesson, key lesson purpose and content NB This whole plan may go to two pages as you include more detail, but you'll get more succinct			
Date/time	**Class**		**Number**
	Overview learning Intentions WALT We are learning to		**Target for teacher learning**
Individual needs to consider/potential misconceptions WILF What I'm looking for..... (Group based expectation) Avoid all, most and some. Work with existing class groups to start, levels of current achievement? Current teacher expectation/ individual targets / IEPs?	**Timing**	**Lesson organisation & management Include as needed Warm up/ starter Introduction/exposition/explanation Introduce group tasks**	**Resources / Materials / ICT Inc LSA support**
		Group / **Wilf (SC) and task detail, inc personalised expectat**	
Assessment focus Group recording Reading records Observation schedule Traffic lights/ thumbs up etc/ smiley faces, 54321 fingers. Record outcomes for follow-up	**By whom**	**Allocate time for working and ensure expectation clear Interim plenary? Restating/ revising Reflective activity, plenary/drawing together/compare with WALT and WILF. Children self evaluation, assessment with recording methodology.** **DON'T WRITE A SCRIPT. Focus on key outlines of activity and key questions. Be planned to think on your feet. Be the film director, rather than the reader of the script.**	**References NC NS other** **Health and safety**
Reflections on lesson / Evaluation / Implications for future planning 3***stars 2$$wishes			

Script writer or a director of studies?

The latter part of my career in education has seen me spending a great deal of time in classrooms observing prospective teachers in training, against the prevailing standards, to quality assure entrants into the profession and to use the outcomes of the audit process to inform the next steps of their development. I have come to see both the simplicities and the complexities of the processes within learning and teaching and have sought to encapsulate them in short, pithy, understandable and importantly, useful feedback.

The drawback in any discussion within education is the ability of participants to visualise what the other is saying. This may be due to a lack of experience, but can sometimes indicate a possible barrier to progress. Visualisation is a significant factor in learning. Without it, it is not feasible to imagine further or possibly even to follow the detail of a conversation.

So quite often it is necessary to verbalise the journey along a continuum, which is articulated in terms of knowing the children really well (analysing), planning effectively, doing, reviewing and recording. The essential start point is the knowing children well, capabilities, attributes, inhibitors. Without this, the foundations of thinking about learning and teaching will be based on assumptions, which ultimately lead to frustration for both learner and teacher.

Part of the dilemma in these discussions is the thought processes of the students with whom I have worked. They are often young, 18-21 years old and desperately wanting to do the right thing to get the best possible grade. They are seeking to mould their own mental models, especially of "what works". This can be a hindrance as they then codify what they are learning into a series of scripts to be repeated.

There are two main types of teacher thought, as summarised by students, those who write scripts to be followed and those who work within a framework, as a director of the learning within the classroom. The former will run the lesson to plan, with reasonable timings and utilising a variety of T&L strategies, but may further determine the process through photocopied worksheets, often aimed at the whole class. They are likely to keep to their script, whatever happens within the lesson.

The latter group will, within the outline that they have prepared, be more able to respond within the lesson parameters to issues that arise, especially from the discussions that take place. They will modify their plan according to their assessment of activities. They will have determined differential expectations of each identified group and will have some individual expectations beyond that. These expectations will be the focus for detailed discussions within the lesson. Tweaking expectations is the hallmark of good teachers, student as well as qualified.

Teaching is a thought process, ahead of and then alongside learners. "Thinking on your feet" is a great maxim for any teacher, as they engage with the detail of learning conversations, seeking to understand where their pupils are, how they are perceiving their challenges and whether they have the capacity to succeed on their own or the help that they need to be guided to succeed.

Good and better teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic thinkers. Their thinking is adaptable and purposeful, moderated by their perception of developing needs within their classroom.

Order and Organisation; food for thought

Operate within different levels of interlocking organisation, starting at school level.

Develop topics as a "specification" that details the essential knowledge that underpins the learning as well as the anticipated range of outcomes across a mixed ability class.

Topics to last as long as needed, not allowed to expand to fill a half term/term.

Flexibility allows linking topics where a teacher sees creative benefits.

An annual plan for each year group (see below), covering all subjects in outline, developed on a July closure, before the new academic year, ensures a positive start in September.

First two weeks in September given to a teacher topic to get to know the children well.

The second Friday of the September term given to admin for the year and time to develop a detailed overview of the remainder of the half terms' plans, based on good understanding of children's needs. A copy came to headteacher.

Teacher short term and daily plans are personal, in any form that supports their teaching.

Teachers meet with parents in week 3 or 4 in September to share the year plan and to share ways in which they might help their children during the year.

The school overall plans ensure that high demand times for teachers, such as report writing, February and June/July, are not subject to high demand training or meeting schedules.

Class teaching

Behaviour management

In starting with behaviour management, I'm expressing it as an essential constituent of an effective classroom. However, I'm not going to set myself up as an expert, and no, there isn't a "but" implied there at all. Probably like many teachers, of my generation, I didn't actively think of behaviour management as a separate, specific entity at all. We did talk of class control, being in charge, having teacher "presence", matching learning to needs. The control was in terms of voice modulation, watching the class behaviours and acting quickly, ensuring the children knew where you were and that you were aware, the apocryphal "eyes in the back of your head" or teacher " antennae".

It's the teacher job to control a class and to ensure that learning can take place. Backing away, or deferring to a higher authority is not a first step, as personal authority is immediately diminished.

Teacher status.

The children have to acknowledge their teacher. A truism; but status matters. Working with ITT students, I'll always advise them to "be a teacher", show confidence, ensure preparation is done, collect resources, "know their stuff" and be able to show by deeds that they are efficient and effective and can produce good lessons.

"I like my teacher. I like what we do." Probably a good starting point.

Rules

All communities of people need some kind of rule system and schools and classrooms are no exception. It's easy to create a list of rules. "You will not, should not, must not……" Rules and laws are often written in the negative, with sanctions if broken.

There have to be consequences to actions, otherwise anarchy reigns. However, schools are also human and humane systems, designed to enhance learning, so might need rules that can appear slightly less draconian than civil laws, although at all times, we have to recognise that the rule of law is overarching and sometimes impinges on school life.

I managed to run a school with three principle rules:-

Be responsible for yourself.

Be responsible for the way you treat others.

Be responsible for our environment.

It worked, because virtually every "thou shalt not…" rule can be incorporated and discussed, with children understanding consequences of actions. It did away with "It's not fair", for the majority.

Making the school a place that children wanted to attend was an essential component.

Rules should apply equally to staff and children. An example would be "No eating x at playtime." Children seeing teachers doing that will see it as unfair.
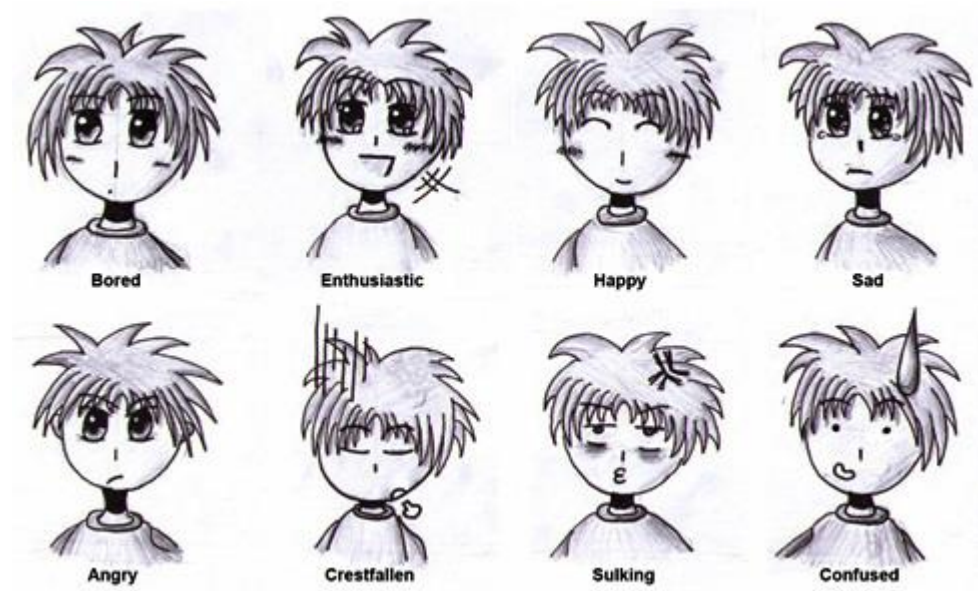
Purpose.

A classroom is a place of learning. That's easy to state, as a teacher, but we have to accept that while

we are employed to be there, children are required to be there, even when they'd rather be elsewhere. It's worth reflecting on adult behaviour in similar situations. It's possible to see the daydreamers, the "sleepers", the slightly bored, the fiddlers, doodlers, all giving behaviour signals that would be seen as negative in a classroom.

I doodle when listening. Some would say a bad habit, but for me that aids concentration and as an adult, I am allowed to do it. Yet teachers will tell children off for doing the same. Ever found yourself telling off a child for behaviours that you exhibit? Don't do as I do, do as I say?

Lessons need a clear purpose. Learning objectives, aims are not new. The Nuffield Science 5-13 science series had a separate booklet entitled "With objectives in mind". Lessons have always had to have a purpose. If the lesson outline is shared with children at the outset, they can see what they are working towards and why they are doing the different elements. This approach especially helps some boys to put together the bits.

Bored · Enthusiastic · Happy · Sad
Angry · Crestfallen · Sulking · Confused

Detail

So you have purpose, now look at the detail. The introduction is the teacher responsibility. The script is in our hands, coupled with resources to exemplify, explore and extend from known beginnings and now, with easy access to ICT, potentially limitless resources from around the world to enhance engagement. This part is essentially saying, "Here's something you may not know."

Hands up or not?

An inspector once described the act of asking for hands up as "the tyranny of the hands" and in many ways he was right. The willing, confident and able learners will sometimes go out of their way to ensure that they are noticed and have their right to a say. In the process, they put pressure on less confident or less able children, who can become a silent, passive group. As a class teacher, I found it relatively easy just to ask the child whose views I wanted to respond. No hands up means all can be asked, so all can think. Hands up can be accompanied by sound or shouting out, so diminishing the learning environment.

Coupled with a partner for discussion, often ideas are far better than an immediate responses.

Differentiation

To some extent, the word, differentiation, became part of discussion after 1988 brought the National Curriculum into being. Before that time, the concept of differentiation was more normally expressed as match and challenge, which, in many ways, describes the practicalities of the approach. The inclusion of the word challenge is the key to potential progress. If the activities within the lesson have limited challenge, progress is unlikely.

How well do you know the children in your class? This will affect how you challenge and interact with the children, as a group and as individuals.

Moving towards an evidence based approach to teaching and learning, seeking methodologies that support the learning needs of the whole class, including special needs and gifted and talented.

The teaching profession, at times, can appear to be seduced by methodologies that eventually become stereotypes. The three part lesson appears often, introduction, activity, resume/summary/plenary. This can support whole class teaching, which occasionally is necessary. The first question that arises is whether all the children are in need of the input. If some are already secure on the teaching point, could they be better occupied on an independent task, based around the same elements, while those who needed the input had direct teaching? The able group could then have a more specific and useful input following this, while the taught group was engaged on their activity. This increased dynamic will have a positive impact on learning behaviours. Once the input is over, there is the question of activity. In a mixed ability class, how is this achieved?

The needs of any grouping of children will be as diverse as the number involved. Every child has individual capabilities, each of which needs to be developed. This causes teachers to shudder, as they deem themselves incapable of meeting the needs of so many individuals. Many then revert to whole class teaching, supported by different challenges for different groups, sometimes with unspecific outcomes, such as "all must, most will, some might". If "some might", who are they and shouldn't that be the bottom line challenge for that specific group. In this case, is "differentiation" potentially allowing some children not to be sufficiently challenged? Differentiation is, in reality, a constituent of assessment and diagnosis, using the information arising out of assessment activity in order to provide clarity in the next steps for learning. Differentiation by outcome, by support and by task are the most used approaches.

Differentiation by outcome, where all the children are given the same task, supports whole class teaching and can be, if created with care and then followed up in detail, a very valuable diagnostic approach. The teacher role is to engage fully with the outcomes to support their subsequent planning. Attempting to do this for a class of thirty children is time consuming and demands considerable analytical skill from the teacher. The outcome should be a careful descriptor of the capability of every child, a series of "can do" statements, providing the starting points for subsequent learning, supporting detailed target setting. It is often the case that differentiation by outcome becomes the norm of the classroom. However, it can also be used as an excuse for no differentiation, where outcomes are largely ignored and have no impact on subsequent learning. So differentiation by outcome is a starting point, not an end in itself.

Differentiation by support is often deployed in classrooms where a teaching assistant is available,

more frequently to work with the lower ability children in the class, sometimes becoming the normal operation. This approach can have impact, but also has drawbacks with overuse, as it can mean that children with specific needs are always working with less qualified staff. This can lead to reduced independence being shown by the children and can make the TA define the role as his/her norm, with the teacher becoming more deskilled in dealing with SEN children. As a result of the teacher analysis of pupil need, differentiation by support should be part of targeted intervention with clear development articulated and anticipated, measurable outcomes known to all participants. Without this, the TA can be working in the dark and the children can spend time drifting, rather than devoting time to learning. Consider whether it is possible to institutionalise dependence in both children and teaching assistants.

Differentiation by task is a harder conceptual approach, but over time is by far the most challenging to learners and, if carefully supported and encouraged by the teacher and other staff, can lead to greater outcomes. The outcomes of a piece of work allow the teacher to sort the children into general ability groups, based on their levels of achievement, which can be generated from level descriptors, "can do" statements or APP-style records. This provides a general range of ability with specific challenge points, each of which can have the next learning steps described. Once these are in place the setting of discrete tasks can happen. These can incorporate more subtle learning challenges, like collaborative or cooperative working methods or independent use of resources. The tasks are set with clear learning outcomes, based on a teacher hypothesis, so the teacher is essentially saying "Within this task you'll be able to show me if you can……", so assessment at outcome is either yes or no to achievement.

Differentiation by task is not just a matter of starting with the special needs children and then making tasks a little bit harder for the rest. This approach may leave able children unchallenged, or insufficiently challenged. Start at both ends then consider the middle. Are the middle ability really all the same? Are they in reality several sub-groups? Do some need tasking nearer the able children, or the lower group and what about the real middle?

Therefore, in reality, it is the tasking of learning opportunities that might cause teachers to avoid the detailed approaches demanded by differentiation by task, as it can be argued that the teacher is creating four or five "lessons" within one. In reality, the tasking is likely to have similarities, but with the implications of targets challenging different end points, providing restrictions for some, perhaps the use of concrete apparatus as a learning support, while others have more open tasking to see how far they can progress. Support and tasking will lead to outcomes. It is the diagnosis of these outcomes that provides the base for the next challenge. Is there a need for pre-teaching, recapitulation of the information or is there room to progress? These questions will receive different results, even within groups.

Gradually the class teacher is moving to personalised learning. The next question may be how much certain able individuals can challenge themselves and take responsibility within their own learning. In this scenario, if each child is capable of self-generated target setting, the teacher role becomes far more subtle, with the need to engage with individualised need. The teacher and TA will at times then become the facilitators of learning, but also available to be the knowledgeable other, teaching as necessary.

Differentiation by expectation.

This reflection was prompted by the #ukedchat Twitter discussion on Thursday 29th November 2012, which was focused on differentiation. There has been much consideration of this topic and it is often the most difficult aspect of teaching practice. Reflecting on interpretations of differentiation, it would appear reasonable to promote the idea of differentiation by expectation, which may be a more accessible idea than differentiation by other means, especially of task, where there can be the perception of planning for several separate lessons in one, so this is then ignored, reverting back to differentiation by support or outcome.

Differentiation by expectation occurs before the learning, not after, so articulated, group-specific expectations provide clarity to the learner and the teacher during and afterwards for engagement and feedback.

Differentiation and the Teaching Standards.

Know your children well, socially and academically. (AoL.)

Know your material and get it across effectively.

Plan to challenge all learners.

Share expectations. (AfL.)

Engage with learning, observe and think on your feet, oral feedback and guidance. (AfL.)

Adapt to identified need, class, group or individual. (AfL.)

Review outcomes, mark to identified needs. (AoL.)

Clear records and targets to support next learning steps. (AfL)

Some teacher planning for differential expectation is articulated as all will, most should, some could, which, although it does appear to provide a scaffold for progress might not provide the rigorous challenge for the most able, nor contribute to the pace of the lesson. Challenging all abilities to produce provides outcome at maximum, achieved within the class, which can be shared to engage all learners in potential, possibly future aspirations.

Differential input

Many teachers have been seduced by the three part lesson approach, input, task and summary or plenary. It can be seen regularly in use, with a large group of children sitting around the teacher on a carpet or at their desks, depending on the age group. The teacher presents the same material to the whole group at the same time. Is it realistic to assume that all the children need the same input, unless perhaps, it is a completely new piece of learning?

If a teacher, standing in front of the class, is aware that some of the class already know the information, why do they still have to sit through another resume of the activity? Are they learning anything? Could they be doing an activity that captures the essence of the information, while allowing the teacher to focus on those who need a more scaffolded, rehearsed approach? The teacher would then follow this up after the input to the remaining group.
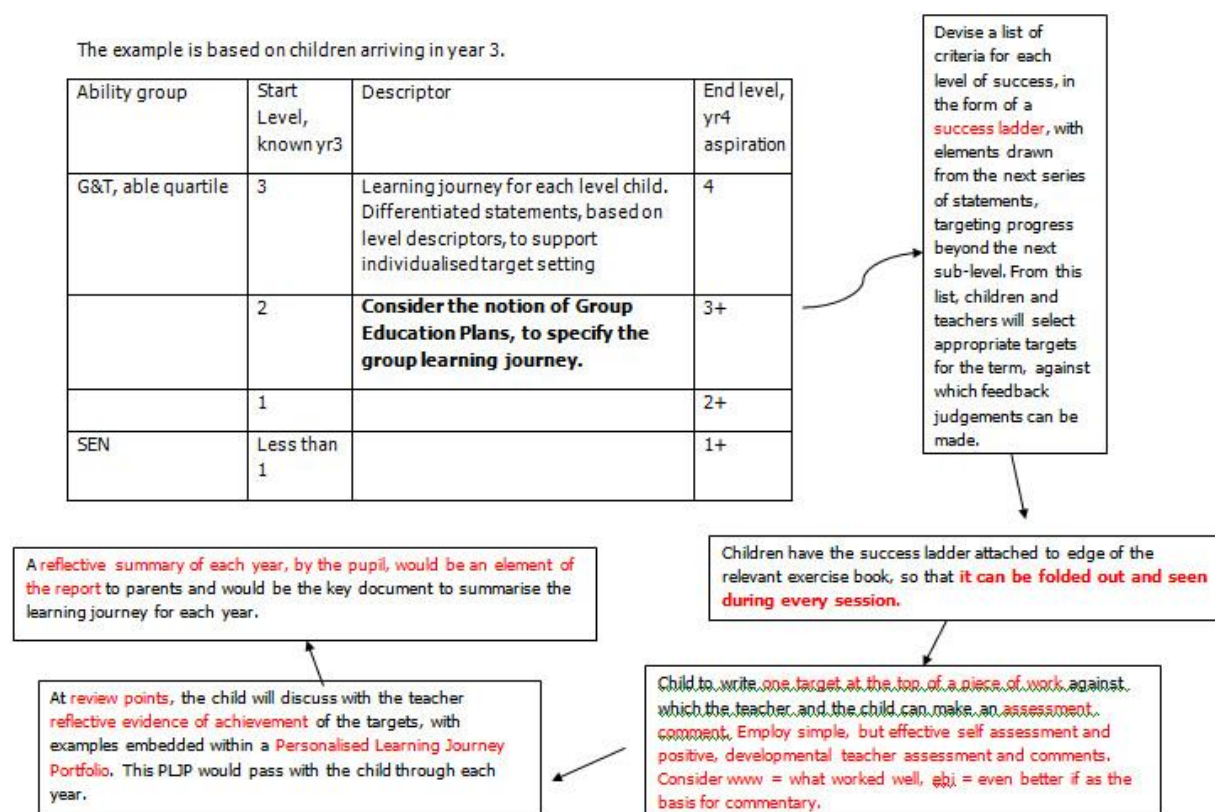
Equally, some children will be finding the activity too hard, so perhaps they could be given a preparatory, sensitising activity before coming to work with the teacher?

This approach is a variation on the three part lesson, but seeks to put the notion of differentiation to more practical use from the beginning of the lesson, rather than just at the task stage. Adopting this approach, which is relatively simple to accomplish, allows greater interaction with the learning needs of the learners at an individual level, guiding the teacher to closer engagement during the task, allowing challenge levels to be refined, feedback to be personalised and children to take more responsibility for their learning.

Whole class inputs can lead to whole class tasking and then a great deal of individual marking. Refining the approach ensures that the outcomes can be more clearly defined, supporting a deeper intervention and future learning.

Developing personalised target setting

Where a school is developing a strong Teaching and Learning agenda, there is usually much data, which is capable of supporting the target setting agenda for the children. However, this does need to be interpreted into useful information to be able to ensure that children are party to their progress. This omission could be a contributory factor in holding back the achievements of some significant groups. With this in mind, the following idea is offered. Choose you own scale if not still using levels.

The example is based on children arriving in year 3.

Ability group	Start Level, known yr3	Descriptor	End level, yr4 aspiration
G&T, able quartile	3	Learning journey for each level child. Differentiated statements, based on level descriptors, to support individualised target setting	4
	2	**Consider the notion of Group Education Plans, to specify the group learning journey.**	3+
	1		2+
SEN	Less than 1		1+

Devise a list of criteria for each level of success, in the form of a success ladder, with elements drawn from the next series of statements, targeting progress beyond the next sub-level. From this list, children and teachers will select appropriate targets for the term, against which feedback judgements can be made.

A reflective summary of each year, by the pupil, would be an element of the report to parents and would be the key document to summarise the learning journey for each year.

At review points, the child will discuss with the teacher reflective evidence of achievement of the targets, with examples embedded within a Personalised Learning Journey Portfolio. This PLJP would pass with the child through each year.

Children have the success ladder attached to edge of the relevant exercise book, so that it can be folded out and seen during every session.

Child to write one target at the top of a piece of work against which the teacher and the child can make an assessment comment. Employ simple, but effective self assessment and positive, developmental teacher assessment and comments. Consider www = what worked well, ebi = even better if as the basis for commentary.

What if differentiation was informed dialogue; ie you know the children really well?

From generic to specific; getting to know the children well. "Have they "got it" and can I move on?"

At heart, differentiation is informed, rational challenge, with the teacher having appropriate expectations of the range of learners and the individuals within the group, responding to issues as they arise and reflecting on the outcomes to determine the next steps.

It is interesting to explore how concepts are built up over time. The notion of differentiation became a "thing" relatively recently, especially in planning demands, but, in doing so, may have lost many of the more nuanced interpretations that had been part of earlier approaches. When I started teaching, we spoke of match and challenge.

I've come to ponder the idea of differentiation as "informed dialogue" with learners, in part from my activities with trainees on a number of routes.

What kind of dialogue do you have with a new acquaintance? Superficial, or deep and meaningful?

Multiple factors come into play in teaching and learning. The teacher needs to have an understanding of child development that spans the full extent of the school age range, to know where the children have come from and where they are going, also to understand the range of needs that can be found in a class. Teachers at "transition" years, 2/3 and 6/7, would benefit from understanding the broader range to ease the transition process. So there is a need to understand progress and outcomes, teaching standard 2, across a very broad range of outcomes.

The absence of evidence across the 4-16/18 age range could be seen as a significant disadvantage in supporting decisions, which is why in some writing in my blog, I have suggested local area and school developmental portfolios leading to a broader picture being made available to teachers at all levels, supporting moderation and developmental discussions.

Trainees and early career teachers don't always have this range of understanding, as their experiences may have been restricted to specific classes. If teachers stay with the same year group over a number of years, this could become the basis for their expectation. Some supply teachers could be in this position and I suppose a case could be made that Secondary teachers who only see classes of learners a couple of times a week might also be in this group. This lack of understanding can lead to more generic, directive language, rather than dialogue; activity can be a greater focus than more open learning opportunities.

Stylised approaches, such as "all, most and some" with "bronze, silver and gold" alternatives, suggest challenge, but, in reality miss the point of focusing challenge in the right place. Visiting classes where the upper challenge could only be tackled when the lower challenges had been achieved suggested that the teacher did not have sufficient knowledge of the learners and that the more able should have been challenged at a higher level from the beginning.

Knowledge of the wider expectation enables reflection on the needs of a class within that range. If, as a Primary teacher, you receive a different class each year, you start almost from scratch. While you may have come across members of the new class beforehand and may have had some transition time with them, they can still appear as an amorphous mass in September, so the initial teaching is also more nebulous as the teacher begins to tease out the individuals, with generic questions leading to more detailed follow up from answers. You get to know the children through the interactions, which lead to ever more nuanced dialogue.

The learning dialogue continue into tasking where challenges become more nuanced as the term and the year progresses. This tweaking and adapting to articulated need is the essential aspect of more personalised approaches. It is a case of getting closer to the learners, so that the impact of the multiple 1:1 conversations is purposeful and effective.

So, as time passes and the number of discussions builds, each supplying information to the participants, the teacher can challenge in more detailed fashion, while the learners can respond in kind. With nuanced outcomes comes focused coaching and feedback, which should, over time lead to progress.

Of course, the underpinning of this is dialogue, teachers and learners talking about the learning. In a classroom where dialogue is absent, the basis for focused, formative discussions may be absent, diminishing the learning experience for learners and teachers.

Learners need something of quality to think about, to explore and to talk about. In talking, they show aspects, if not all, of their thinking. This gives aware teachers a clue as to next steps, for individuals and as a whole, which is the essence of informed teaching and learning. Talking learning supports all aspects of the teaching and learning cycle, as the evidence base is greater.

Growth mind-set; in a nutshell.

Growth mind-set might occur when there is sufficient challenge that offers...

Something to think about.

Something to talk about.

Something that allows appropriate levels of decision-making.

Something than enables use and application of a broader range of skill and knowledge, such as measures in maths.

Something to note down, as ongoing aides memoire and instructions.

Something that allows evaluation, at different points and at the end, so that learning is always central and children see themselves as responsible producers.

Something that enables articulation of learning and next steps that are accessible to the learner.

Tasking learning

Getting learning tasks absolutely right all of the time is tough. However, an astute teacher is likely to be aware if the task might have some leeway and will be looking for the signs of behavioural distraction, daydreaming, chatting, facial expressions showing concern or possibly that the tasks are easy, and will take appropriate action.

However, tasking is the bread and butter of learning, as the task seeks to promote an extension of learning, challenging children to secure current knowledge and applying this in new situations.
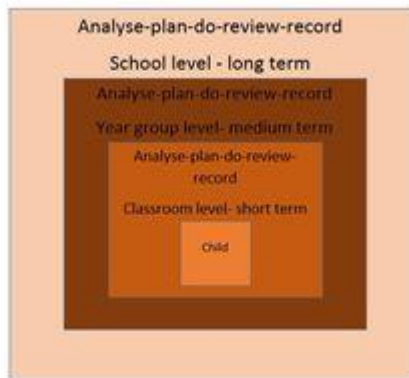
One of the significant pleasures in being enabled to unpick how a school works, is that the schools are invariably open and honest with me and are seeking the external view that might nudge them forward in their development. As each school is subtly different, that can mean that interrogation has to look in fine detail at different elements, to determine how they link and possibly how they either support or hinder aspects of growth.

I am also very visual in the way that I think about contexts. I have to have the bigger picture, so that I can explore the constituent parts. Schools, after all, are systems, of interlocking systems, with the key one being the system that operates around each learner, so that they are enabled to make the best progress at that point in time. This also allows for those individuals for whom expectations of the whole group may not be applicable, as a result of issues specific to them. As teachers, we have to accept that life does affect learning patterns. It does for adults, so it does for learners and they are young, so may not yet have built their coping mechanisms.

There are many elements which go together to make up the complex event that we call learning.

Some commentators argue that you can't "see" learning in a lesson, and yes, perhaps that, as a phenomenon is not easily visible, but it is feasible to explore the learning intentions of the lesson and to qualitatively explore the learning environment, the experiences and the challenge and effort being demanded, so that it is possible to consider the likelihood of whether learning might be taking place at that point.

Knowing where the learners are at the beginning of the discrete series of experiences they will encounter though a series of lessons is essential, so that they will then be taken on a journey alongside the teacher, rather than the teacher running ahead and learners lagging behind in a long tail. Knowing where they are headed is important too. If the "map" is only ever in the teacher's head, then learners are not aware of the destination, nor can they have an understanding of where they are on the journey. If one was to take a climbing analogy, from the base camp, we want to journey to a specific point, or pitch, where we can take stock before moving onto the next one, so that the journey as a whole is always within the learner's understanding and developing capability.

Having an understanding of what "getting there" might look like is also an essential element of the learning process. If this is not clear, then effort can be directed into other areas, which might have lesser impact on a learner outcome. For some, the journey to each point may need to be broken down further and they may require guidance on the way, so the leader/teacher/TA has to "drop back" to encourage and support. Some might like to "climb/run ahead". If that is the case then the teacher has to determine whether this can be accomplished safely. They can't fall off an exercise book, so it is probably very safe, but some teachers do supply limitations. This is the point at which real independence can be developed.

Task Setting (What's the challenge?)

Limitations can be embedded in the activities that are given to children. In my last post, I looked at task setting and it is to this that I'd want to return, as it is, without doubt, the determinant of progress. Real learning, at least to me, requires embedding what is known into overcoming a challenge and solving problems. Much school learning is based on activities, doing, following a set of instructions, rather than applying knowledge and skills to challenging scenarios. This "recipe" approach to teaching can be effective in the right hands, as can all approaches, however in the wrong hands it embeds a limitation, created by the task. A level x task, given to a level x learner, will produce level x learning. Task choice and challenge is therefore an essential skill.

Unpicking the level of challenge, the need for learners to think, to plan, to organise, to select, to determine routes and ideas rather than just follow instructions, is an important aspect. Completing an activity sheet does not necessarily equate to learning. End to end activity sheets does not mean a scheme of work.

The process of learning has to be a dynamic interplay between the learner and the context, making active links between what is already known and what is being laid before them. To that end the interplay of the formal lessons, homework and time between lessons would also appear, to me, to be critical. How much homework is an unrelated activity, just because homework has to be given? What if the challenge was continuous, so that homework became pre-thinking, preparation for the lesson, or a reflection on the learning outcomes of the current one?

Boxing everything would appear to embed potential limitations, in inexperienced hands, but sometimes in more experienced hands, as a result of the system. From that point of view, the diagram at the header is limited as it implies boxes rather than a dynamic.

Knowledge and Skills

Learners need to know things in order to understand the world around them. Knowledge underpins all thinking, but the awakening by teaching or discovery through experience of new knowledge has to be explored in relation to what is already known. Making links is essential.

The knowledge area provides the context for the learning, sometimes in discrete subject areas, sometimes in less discrete manner; the real world does not exist in subject boxes. The discrete area allows specific concepts, (current) knowledge and subject specific skills to be explored and developed to hone the skills over time to provide capacity to explore for oneself, at different levels, each of which, I would argue has validity. One does not have to reach a specific level of expertise before using what is known to explore. As a teenager, I was interested in entomology, not as an expert, but as a way to explore the natural world. It was a specific interest, but linked with GCE and A level studies, allowed deeper insights in a very specific area.

The skills of the subject often provide the process skills, and it is this area that needs careful consideration, as it is within the process skills that reflective practice enables the involved teacher to determine where any gaps occur.
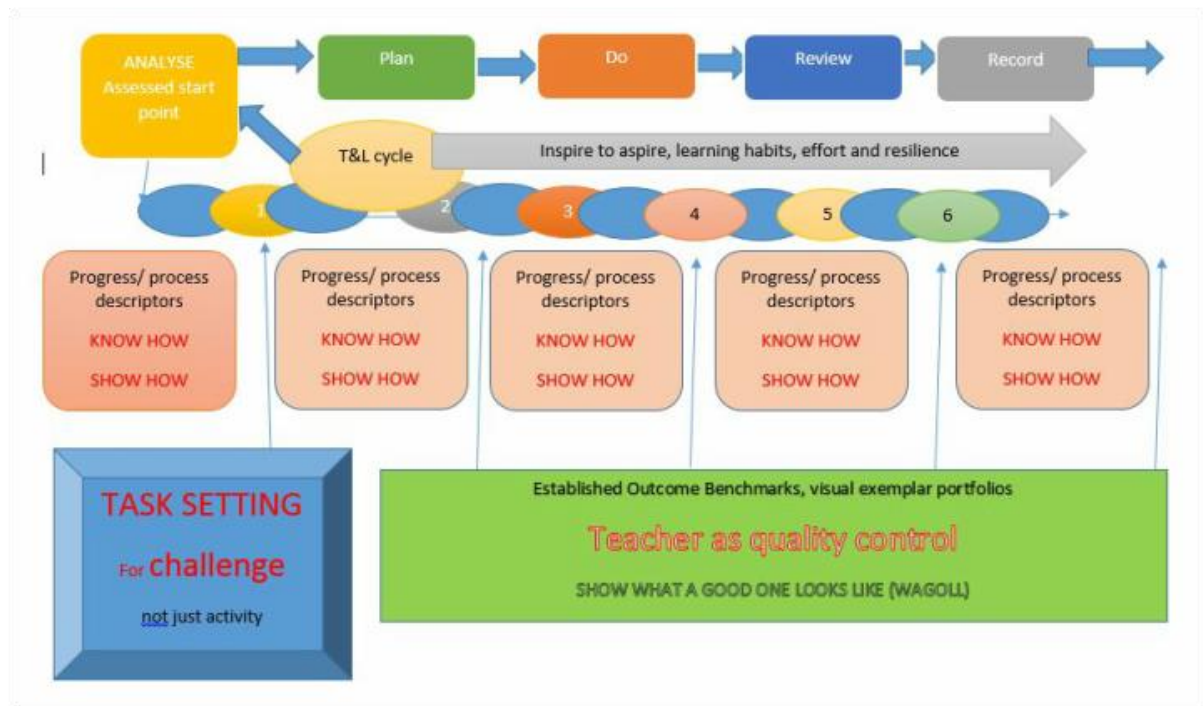
Active Processing- Making Sense of Things

While a teacher might present knowledge in contexts in ways that they think are suitable for the children in their classes, **there is never a guarantee that the message gets across to the learner.**

- The teacher language style, and the vocabulary being used might preclude a learner from picking up the essential information that they need to make progress. Not all learners are active listeners and even those who are can miss parts of information as they reflect on an earlier snippet of knowledge.

- Even if the message does get across there is no guarantee that the learner will have the capacity to process the knowledge, in some cases because they do not have prior experiences which allow them to link the new information to a known position. They already have a deficit, which, if undetected, embeds and deepens the deficit, by adding another layer of deficit.

- And, even if they have the capacity to take the information in and to process it, there are some learners who have difficulty in expressing what they know in ways that are acceptable as outcomes.

The teacher role is to place learning opportunities in front of children, it is also to walk along beside the learners, especially identified vulnerable groups. Engaging and investigating their progressive understanding supports fine tuning of interactions, the feedback, the guidance in a lesson, the alteration of learning expectations and the written feedback.

It is a cyclic event, with each successive outcome creating a new baseline of expectation, from reflection on learning outcomes, which is the essence of this diagram.

ANALYSE Assessed start point → Plan → Do → Review → Record →

T&L cycle — Inspire to aspire, learning habits, effort and resilience

1 2 3 4 5 6

Progress/ process descriptors	Progress/ process descriptors	Progress/ process descriptors	Progress/ process descriptors	Progress/ process descriptors
KNOW HOW	KNOW HOW	KNOW HOW	KNOW HOW	KNOW HOW
SHOW HOW	SHOW HOW	SHOW HOW	SHOW HOW	SHOW HOW

TASK SETTING For challenge not just activity

Established Outcome Benchmarks, visual exemplar portfolios

Teacher as quality control

SHOW WHAT A GOOD ONE LOOKS LIKE (WAGOLL)

- Teaching and Learning is a series of interlocking expectations over time; long, medium and short term.

- Analysis underpins the detail of planning, which in turn describes what will happen in the lesson, during and after which the reflective teacher adjusts expectations to evident outcomes, with appropriate records kept as aides memoire.

- Tasks set embed the expectations of the learning, which should be challenging to thinking rather than activity based.

- The product, the outcome and the process are important, with the latter capable of investigation to discover the aspects which a child finds difficult, receptive, processing or expressive difficulty. The former can be compared to aspirational outcomes and investigated for future learning steps.

- You don't really know what they know unless they can communicate it to you and there are many routes to communication. It's not just spoken or written.

Is it good enough?

That is for the teacher and the learner to determine. If exemplars are shared, they can be discussed against the learner outcome, with a descriptor of next steps shared. Once shared, they become a common expectation, for the learner focus. Showing progress can be good enough for an individual. If there is a "bottom line" expectation, this can be explored with learners to establish the personalised route necessary to achieve this. Specific support and guidance may be needed.

I particularly like the idea that learning is "a work in progress", with the implication of try and retry/draft and redraft; consider the French verb essayer-to try.

Ever since I started teaching there's been a debate about quality or quantity. This arose mainly from consideration of the amount of writing that children were doing; it appeared to be most lessons and every subject apart from in Maths, where the concern was the number of "sums" they were doing. The latter often depended on the approach of the school-decided scheme to be followed.

An associated debate can be seen in the process or product discussions that regularly arise, which can morph into knowledge vs skills, or progressive vs traditional.

Teaching is probably best done in an ordered and organised way, to ensure that information/knowledge is imparted in ways that ensure that it is available to the learner in timely fashion to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to engage with their ongoing learning challenges. In the same way, as an adult learner, if I don't know something, for example in a practical area like plumbing, it's better to look at the You Tube tutorial, or read the manual, before undertaking the task. To be taught does not necessitate an actual teacher being present though. Auto-didacts do it themselves, with varying degrees of success, but, like all teaching and learning, that is the case.

Learning is much messier to quantify and is only really made visible in situations where the learner has to apply what has been learned to produce a defined outcome. Fixing a light or fitting a radiator both have very clear outcomes, work/not work. Learning outcomes in school are usually less clear cut. Children have different start points, different cultural backgrounds and family support or guidance, retain information differently. As a result, outcomes will vary. Therefore, it is important for children to reflect on their own performance in order to provide quality personal challenge.

Personal benchmarks can be established with each piece of completed work. A benchmark allows a return to a prior position to reflect on the journey and the progress made. Constantly establishing what is "good for me", with articulated improvement statements, allows consideration of the next steps. Reflecting on the journey enables the learner to become a personal driver within the process.

In order to take part in this, learners have to be inducted into the language of improvement. This will be a combination of process/capability statements (skills) and defined learning contexts, which provide the knowledge base. The defined learning contexts and the essential learning processes are inevitably the provided curriculum, determined by adults. Both of these can provide exemplars of what quality outcomes would looks like and the means to achieve.

Capability is in the descriptor of the learner. Judged against the process, it is possible to determine where a learner is on a journey. If judgement, personal or teacher, is constantly against a model of perfection, **a lack of perceived capability can become debilitating.** It is not uncommon for a child to say that they can't do something. This can mean "I can't do this as well as I know you would like me to, so I'm not going to try and fail". In the past, such a situation has allowed teachers and parents to volunteer comments which have been demeaning and unsupportive of learning in any form. A pass/fail mentality does not support sustained progress.

So, if a child is to be introduced to the language of self-improvement, this needs to be a common language, supporting dialogue, not an imposed language of teacher judgement. It should concentrate on build-up commentary, rather than over-focus on negatives and should be based in a clear knowledge of the learner, so that it is personal, not generic.

There is an imperative to replace level based commentary within the next incarnation of the National Curriculum. Will learners suddenly start to produce exceptional work, just because the curriculum has changed? Will four year olds, on entry to school, be enabled to read and write Shakespeare, or are they likely to go through the same phases as every other generation starting school? Will changing the curriculum embed the expectation that every child will start in Reception at the same stage and make the same progress throughout the next seven years? Yet, that could be a reading of the year-based curriculum expectations, **with judgement outcomes of above expectation, in line with year expectation, below expectation.** Each of these statements is likely to have an element of subjectivity.

Equally though, unless process has been clearly established, the yearness element could emphasise knowledge, at the expense of process, so could provide a limitation to a rise in quality while "mastery" by all is sought. Could the "above expectation" children be handicapped by waiting for the others to catch up, or "below expectation" be further labelled, by teachers and fellow pupils as a result of a need to wait? I have the image of a group of learner out for a walk/journey with the teacher. The keen ones keep up, and some might go ahead, but with oversight and might then have to wait for the stragglers, with associated comments about being "slowcoaches" etc.

Perhaps a way forward is to use outcomes to establish benchmarks, or exemplars in order to balance our future judgements. Using Performance Indicators, there will be clear examples from children achieving these and higher levels. They could provide **a benchmark portfolio of outcomes,** to support future expectations. This would ensure that future standards are in line with previous expectations, but also support future learning from examples.

A case of show how developing know how.

Personal learning goals; target setting.

This might suffer from being an adult concept, especially for younger learners. Perhaps it would be more useful to talk in terms of what learners are trying to get better at.

Current target setting is also often a hidden agenda, with targets stuck inside book covers, in another booklet, or in a teacher's planner. It also suffers in some places from lacking a dynamic; three targets set for a half term review. If not achieved, then reset. It sucks the life out of learners putting effort into their learning.

An alternative approach is to

- **Put personalised targets on a fold out slip, at the edge of the exercise book,** so that during the lesson, the child and the teacher can be aware of the specific targets.

- This can **prompt conversations** specific to that child, **support the learner's self-evaluations** and also **support teacher oral and written feedback**, as the slips can be folded out during marking.

- Targets can be achieved, then **become non-negotiable** in future work, with new ones added.

- This approach also **supports record keeping and tracking**, as the slip forms an on-going record of achievement.

Organisation of an exercise book to support writing development and aides memoire to learner and teacher

And so the cycle starts again, new tailored challenges, regular, purposeful engagement, reflection, adjustment, feedback, reflection and improvement, ad infinitum.

We are all, or should be, life-long learners, more often without a teacher. Life offers challenges. We need to create solution finders.

Inclusive Learning environment. Dependency or independence?

Ease of access and ease of movement. Making life as easy as possible for all parts of the community.

Over recent years, where schools have been built, rebuilt or refurbished, attention has been paid to the need to accommodate to the requirements of a wider variety of potential users of the site than might have previously been the case. I have visited a range of schools across the southern half of the UK and seen considerable innovation in the use of space and adaptations to particular needs, both in new and refurbished buildings. In the latter case, the refurbishment is often an ongoing project, with the school continuing to function while part of the school is effectively a building site.

It is certainly a truism in education that you have to work with what you have, as a basic resource. The spaces and the resources within the building have to work well to effect good inclusive practice. I would hope that while managers walk around the school site, attention is paid to the ease of

access, and how the site could be remodelled, if necessary to best possible use, probably with the least possible cost in the current climate.

Checking that **the learning environment is well planned to support learning and teaching**.

There is an obvious need for classroom spaces, of sufficient quantity and quality to house the number of classes of children. Quality is often determined by the amount of space, with a notional 55sq m for a classroom as used to be the norm. This can vary from one style of school to another and can depend on the date of building. Some schools have large rectangular classrooms with areas for messy activity, as well as carpet areas.

When I was a HT, my school was an open plan Scola building, with 35sq m "base areas" and the other 18sq m as "working corridors". Adaptations, in-house (me, as jobbing carpenter), to work spaces, such as creating art tables from 240cm by 120cm blockboard on top of linked paper trollies, enabled working space to be created, but still keeping corridor movement free. Sometimes it takes a bit of imagination. If you can think it, someone can design it.

The number of tables in a room can sometimes exceed the needs of the number of learners. It is well worth looking at the impact on space of too much furniture, as this can limit space for other valuable activities. If space is limited, it will preclude ease of movement around the classroom, for children and adults. Opportunities to bump into each other may well limit the approaches that can be assayed effectively.

Teachers have to consider the order and organisation of resources for accessibility and ease of movement as well as easy return is a bread and butter element of good teaching. This is especially important for resources for individual, including specialised, needs; eg more able learners and/or learners requiring additional support.

Spaces are now often created, outside the classroom spaces, for withdrawal groups. This puts pressure on the broader availability of space. It is well worth while debating the merits, or otherwise, of such an approach. In an inclusive school, what does a child lose by being taken out of a classroom? Is 1:1 provision potentially very challenging to a child who knows that they are struggling to learn, as they are permanently in the spotlight? Is it better to have a group, but with the adult focus on specific individuals?

How are additional adults deployed to support learning? These additional staff might have a specific remit, with an individual child, and may well have had some specialist training to the needs of that child, but the majority will be generalist support. It is well worth remembering that they are not always specialists, yet, in many cases, where they are deployed to support the lower achieving group, the needs of specific individuals may be greater than the skill or knowledge of the adult to support. There should be an interplay of responsibilities, with the classteacher spending an equal amount of time with this group, providing high quality teaching to needs, while the additional adult acts as "spotter" for broader needs. Activities can be planned to achieve this arrangement.

Resources, the library and accessible ICT should be arranged to support learning, with resources purchased to identifiable need. Where resources are well ordered and easily accessible, children can become more independent in retrieval and return, a relatively low level activity, but which, in practice, can free up adult time.

Learning to find information has always been a part of learning. Most schools retain a library, as well as now having good ICT equipment available to children. Children, well trained in information finding can become independent in this area, again freeing the teacher. Freeing up adult time is important,

as "freed time" can be deployed to support those in greater need. Whole class approaches can often embed practices that centre on the teacher as the provider, diminishing aspects of independence.

Where specialist kit is needed for an individual child, it is essential for all adults to be aware of it's use and application, as any one of the adults could be called upon to resolve an issue. Examples might be: use of ICT to enhance learning across abilities; adaptive ICT for individual needs; additional resources and adaptations for disabled (differently abled) students.

Communication, oral and written, is effective in supporting teaching and learning, including parent needs for translation and interpretation.

Inclusive schools communicate effectively. I can say that after visiting a hundred schools unpicking their approaches, with a wide range of partners, children, parents and guardians and external professionals. Good communication is highly valued. The simplicity of a morning system, where a parent communicates a concern to the school, that is received by one member of staff, acknowledging the concern, passed to a relevant responsible member of staff to investigate or respond early, reduces parent anxiety substantially. The school is seen as caring and concerned and supportive of parents.

In many ways, communication has become much easier over the past forty years. From my early classroom days, where the home-school diary was the highlight of shared communication, today, it is possible to email, phone (fixed and mobile), text or put information on the school website, as well as the traditional hard copy methods.

Where other heritage languages are a part of the school community, some schools translate their written communications to specific parent needs, while some have a form of "parent buddy", whose role is to interpret to peers who may not be able to read their own language or English. These buddies can accompany the peer parent into meetings to translate as needed.

There are systems such as the **"Young Interpreters"** scheme, developed by Hampshire county Council Ethnic Minorities support team, which trains children to support their language compatriots as they arrive in the school. This can enable the newcomer to feel a sense of belonging, as well as provide someone looking out for them.

Positive outcomes of participation in inclusive activities, leading to high quality learning, such as displays and photographs, are evident. Celebrating outcomes.

With digital photographs easily effected these days, it is possible to keep a visual record of all sorts of activities. These images can be used to create written records, as they act as a storyboard, which can enhance recall and vocabulary and language used to describe the activity. Where a child has a problem transcribing, a scribe can secure the ideas and write these up, recording the child involvement, so that pleasure is derived from a piece of work on display.

The impact of having a piece of work on display cannot be underestimated. Pride is a positive motivator; having achieved this once, the child may strive to do so again. Work quality can be significantly enhanced. The display of work also tells the child that they are valued by the class teacher.

Children like to feel good about their efforts. Knowing that the teacher notices that they have made effort, and that, as a result of this effort, their work is showing improvement, provides the basis for further effort and potential improvement.

Celebration can be simply reading a good phrase or sentence aloud for others to appreciate. It might be sharing the process used to solve a maths equation. It can be noted in terms of house points, raising a child on a star chart, or be certificated in some form, in class or within a celebration assembly.

A phone call or a postcard home broadens the positive web, making the child feel good within a broader group.

No system is "perfect". The underlying organisation of the school enables the smooth running of the day job, of educating the range of children who inhabit the space. It is, always has been and always will be, a case of "best efforts", identifying and accommodating to needs within the restrictions of the available spaces and resources.

Occasionally walk your school like a parent, or a new set of eyes. I have worked with schools on a mini project similar to the **"secret shopper"** scheme, to get an external view of arrival and being shown around the school. That can be an eye opener. Equally, some schools undertake small scale polls to ascertain the quality of communication at different points of the school.

Analyse need, plan to cater for anticipated need, communicate widely and effectively and regularly check in practice.

Everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging.

Could this, or similar, be said about your school?

The school building, which meets the basic and extended needs of learners and staff, is carefully maintained. The main teaching spaces are large, light and airy, with a large number of very interesting displays and relevant ICT equipment. There is adequate space for teaching and learning, including spaces for small-group work and very well-equipped libraries, developed recently to a high standard. Classrooms use wall space to demonstrate learning points to pupils.

Very high quality displays present the work of pupils across the curriculum and encourage passers to stop and spend time to browse and admire. Some classrooms and some displays presented as a little cluttered, which could cause a slight sensory overload for some learners.

Outdoors, there is an excellent range fixed play equipment and a wide variety of small games are encouraged by the very motivated group of Play leaders (midday supervisors). There is a good-sized grass area used as often as the weather allows. Early Years and KS1 pupils have access to separate outdoor spaces, well equipped to support a broad range of experiential and physical play. The older children are also able to enjoy excellent facilities, developing imaginative play, as well as more usual physical play such as football. The very high quality outdoor provision from Early Years to Year 6 ensures that the learning continues outside class time. An interesting mix of physical challenge, experience, construction, musical instruments, small group games equipment and space for specific activity, such as dance, offer a broad range of opportunities for children to engage with friends in constructive activity.

The school has a large hall which lends itself well to whole-school events and productions. The year four children were preparing a concert during the first day. The excited voices were easy to hear, the quality of singing and the obvious enjoyment being communicated could be felt behind a closed door.

Wheelchair access within the school is very good, as seen through the easy movement of several children during the visit.

Class teaching; food for thought

It's the teacher job to control a class and to ensure that learning can take place.

Backing away, or deferring to a higher authority is not a first step, as personal authority is immediately diminished.

All communities of people need some kind of rule system and schools and classrooms are no exception.

A classroom is a place of learning.

Lessons need a clear purpose.

Differentiation; how well do you know the children in your class? This will affect how you challenge and interact with the children, as a group and as individuals.

Differentiation and the Teaching Standards.

Know your children well, socially and academically. (AoL.)

Know your material and get it across effectively.

Plan to challenge all learners.

Share expectations. (AfL.)

Engage with learning, observe and think on your feet, oral feedback and guidance. (AfL.)

Adapt to identified need, class, group or individual. (AfL.)

Review outcomes, mark to identified needs. (AoL.)

Clear records and targets to support next learning steps. (AfL)

At heart, differentiation is informed, rational challenge, with the teacher having appropriate expectations of the range of learners and the individuals within the group, responding to issues as they arise and reflecting on the outcomes to determine the next steps.

Differentiation is matching known needs and challenging effectively.

Growth mind-set; in a nutshell.

Growth mind-set might occur when there is sufficient challenge that offers...

Something to think about.

Something to talk about.

Something that allows appropriate levels of decision-making.

Something than enables use and application of a broader range of skill and knowledge, such as measures in maths.

Something to note down, as ongoing aides memoire and instructions.

Something that allows evaluation, at different points and at the end, so that learning is always central and children see themselves as responsible producers.

Something that enables articulation of learning and next steps that are accessible to the learner.

Challenge is a cyclic event, with each successive outcome creating a new baseline of expectation, from reflection on learning outcomes.

Quality assurance is a central element of teacher's thinking; is it good? Is it good enough?

Personalisation is the ultimate in differentiation, based on multiple layers of expectation.

Communication, oral and written, is effective in supporting teaching and learning.

Everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging.

Responsive teaching

If process is linked to outcomes, it is also closely linked with project management, whether the formalised use, as in building a house, or in the informal day to day application of order and organisation in making something happen, eg doing the shopping, where a list is made, the best shop chosen, the act of selecting the goods, before returning home to sort and put away the shopping in the appropriate place for later retrieval. The shopping being accomplished is the end product. Of course, projects used to be the bread and butter of the Primary classroom, with English, maths and other cross-curricular opportunities created. They can still be seen in high quality design and technology and art classes, where outcomes are reviewed before recreation. It also happens within English lessons **where sessions are devoted to DIRT, dedicated improvement and response time.**

Every aspect of the process of learning, whether project, theme or single subject, is controlled by the teacher. The subject matter, the task, the place, the time available and the resource choice are more often decided beforehand.

Where the product is the main focus, the process can be short-circuited, with a recipe style approach to the process.

This approach can limit children in their learning, by removing from them the ability to think through the process, so by default, the teacher and the task become barriers to learning. I encounter examples of this during observation of students on school experience, where their personal or professional insecurities mean that they seek to control every aspect of the lesson process for every child. Recipes 'r us and photocopied sheets have a field day.

The first example was a science lesson, seeking to allow year five children to explore fair testing in science with a light theme. Because the student had specified step by step the process to be followed, the children could not demonstrate abilities beyond National Curriculum level 4, as they were not enabled to be independent in selecting materials and developing their own approach to the testing.

The second example was an investigation in maths, where the step by step approach limited how the children could seek to explore and experiment with an idea, decide their working method and forecast the possible outcomes.

Of course, process and product cannot exist without purpose, which may be the embedded within the product**.** However, there is a difference between a factory production line, where a quality defined product has to be the end point and the process of learning how to do something.

Talking about wider experiences enables learning to develop and become embedded appropriately within individuals.

Experience, Explore and Explain; foundation subjects are essential for vocabulary, or every lesson is an English lesson.

Everyone is looking for value for money. Two for one offers in shops seem to have an impact, so why have we not sought to find ways to make best use of available learning time to ensure that we get as much value as possible from each lesson? If lessons could provide 200% value, how much further could children progress?

The current curriculum is divided into separate subjects, with a perceived hierarchy starting with maths and English. As a result, some curricular areas are beginning to find that they are at best becoming marginalised, but just about holding onto their place within learning opportunities, or at worst, that they have been put aside, at least while the pressure seems to be to increase headline scores in the "basics".

Over my career, I have had many discussions about the place of reading, writing and speaking time within topic areas. The argument polarises around the debate whether the English elements are there for the purposes of broadening opportunity for English, or whether they are science, history, geography and so on. This sometimes seemed a distraction, but usually had the impact in some classes of ensuring that the available time for topic areas was spent doing more English, rather than allowing time for the practical aspects of the topic subject. The loss of this practical time reduced the potential for the higher level topic skills to be developed, reducing the time for children to really engage with the subject.

I would want to argue, and here I know that I have no counter argument, so am free to indulge in a flight of fancy, that the high level engagement in topic areas supports the development of higher level English skills, purely and simply because the children have to develop the vocabulary and spoken structures within which they can seek to express what they have encountered, as reported speech, prior to reported writing or writing instructions or some other non-fiction element. The deeper the engagement, the higher will be the quality of speech, reportage and subsequent attempts at writing.

Jerome Bruner wrote that "*the language of education, if it is to be an invitation to reflection and culture creating, cannot be the so-called uncontaminated language of fact and 'objectivity'. It must express stance and must invite counter- stance, and in the process leave place for reflection, for meta-cognition. It is this that permits one to reach higher ground, this process of objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning around and re-considering it*."

If children have something to think about, then talk about, isn't it easy to see that they might then have something to write about? Time to talk, explore, play with ideas and language should be a part of every aspect of life, in and out of school classrooms. I know that not all homes are geared up to do this, but every classroom should be a language workshop, with a wide variety of opportunities for children to engage with each other and with the adults present to share and refine their thoughts through discussion.

Why have we held on to the thought that silent classrooms are best?

All talk or no talk?

P.O.W. Alicia Keys

I'm a prisoner of words unsaid
Just lonely feelings locked away in my head
I trap myself further every time I stay quiet
I should start to speak but I stop and stay silent
And now I've made my own hard bed
Inside a prison of words unsaid

To my mind, an essential, probably the most essential, aspect of learning is communication, from and between participants, whether overt, as in conversation and discussion, or internally through reflection on an idea, with opportunities to explore thinking through dialogue.

It is important to remember that for, potentially, a large number of children, whether from an English or other heritage background, the classroom is the most significant language environment that they will encounter. Many children start formal education with a deficit compared to peers, in some areas to a significant degree. The means of bridging this is overt modelling on a grand scale.

If teaching is getting an idea across to an audience, this requires a level of communication skill that can be adapted to the needs of the group if there is a sense of mismatch.

A didactic lecturer simply puts ideas into the learning context. If the audience is receptive and in tune with the information being shared, they will be capable of extracting details which accord with or add to the sum of their knowledge. It may challenge pre-conceived notions. This is relatively sophisticated however, but it is reasonable to assume a level of intellectual capacity in, say, a university setting.

However, there can appear to be a view that this is "the way" to teach. If that is the case, then there is an argument for a singularity of approach, which could be delivered through an interactive whiteboard and broadband link, using those designated as "super teachers". TV series, produced by the OU and BBC could be used.

In an Early Years setting, simply talking at the children is likely to encounter a very different response. How long can a three/four year old listen to a single source constructively? Are the words

a supplement to other experiences which hold the attention and provide the motivation, rather than the essential core? Young children have a more limited vocabulary, into which they embed ongoing learning, making links and adaptations. The richness of the available experiences will enable the broadest possible use of language, involving a wider range of naming words, with accompanying descriptive vocabulary.

In a vocabulary and experience rich environment, learners are enabled to listen to adults and peers using words to construct ideas, to explore beyond the immediate into imagination and speculation, further enriching opportunities. Learners who are enabled to be articulate offer a purposefully listening teacher the chance to share and explore their models of thought, by getting learners to unpick their thought process. This modelling offers other learners an insight into different modes of thinking, in so doing, allowing them to develop their own.

If, however, from this stage, the primary source of words and communication is by and through the teacher, although one would expect a significant level of modelling, without the opportunity to use and embed the language being learned, the child may make significantly less progress, as the articulation to an audience allows for feedback, questioning, clarification, rephrasing and a reassessment of the original thought. This can also be seen as oral rehearsal for writing, where ideas are considered, drafted and redrafted after feedback and reflection.

Classroom lessons and outside experiences should be workshops for ideas. Ideas are captured in drawings, models and words. The richer the idea generation and the breadth and depth of reflective thinking possible within the learning space, the greater the potential for learning.

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Just lonely feelings locked away in my head
I trap myself further every time I stay quiet
I should start to speak but I stop and stay silent
And now I've made my own hard bed
Inside a prison of words unsaid

I am a P.O.W. not a prisoner of war a prisoner of words

Like a soldier I'm a fighter, yet only a puppet
Mostly I only say what you wanna hear
Could you take it if I came clear?
Or would you rather see me stoned on a drug of complacency and compromise
M.I.A. I guess that's what I am.Scraping this cold earth
For a piece of myself for peace in myself

It'd be easier if you put me in jail if you locked me away
I'd have someone to blame but these bars of steel are of my making
They surround my mind and have me shaking
My hands are cuffed behind my back, I'm a prisoner of the worst kind, in fact
A prisoner of compromise, a prisoner of compassion
A prisoner of kindness, a prisoner of expectation

A prisoner of my youth, run too fast to be old
I've forgotten what I was told, ain't I a sight to behold?

A prisoner of age dying to be young, to my head is my hand with a gun
And it's cold and it's hard, 'cause there's nowhere to run
When you've caged yourself by holding your tongue

I'm a prisoner of words unsaid
Just lonely feelings locked away in my head
It's like solitary confinement every time I stay quiet
I should start to speak but I stop and stay silent
And now I've made my own hard bed
Inside a prison of words unsaid.

Something to talk about

While undertaking a school assessment, I had the opportunity to stand and observe, but the event I was witnessing warranted more than a passing glance.

A Learning Support Assistant was working with a small group of boys, whom I later discovered were, or were thought to be on the Autism Spectrum. They had a collection of rocks, to look at and handle and were encouraged to do so, at the same time sharing words which that the handling brought to mind. These were recorded, for later use. Over time the words themselves were discussed, seeking to embed new words into the conceptual understanding of the children.

They had a programme on the Interactive Whiteboard with information about the rocks, which they were encouraged to read, collaboratively. They had something which allowed them to retrieve appropriate vocabulary, the expression of which enabled the LSA to investigate, through careful and subtle questions any additional understanding and to add to the sum of their experience.

In another room, a second LSA was working with a group exploring spatial words, but with a real context. A strip of card, with pictures of cars in a row, was in front of each child, who had to select the appropriate car from a basket in the middle of the table, so 1-1 matching was at the heart of the experience. Each child had to count the cars, so ordinal number, appropriate to them. There then followed a discussion of where cars were in relation to each other, eg in front, behind, between, next to, but as full oral sentences. "The yellow car is between the red car and the black car." Thinking is an essential component of learning; without it a learner would not exist, except in the most passive form, the stereotypical "empty jug". I can't say for certain that every child learned in these experiences. It would need a revisit and a check on their retention of the information.

How can we ever know what is going on in a learner's head, unless there are opportunities for them to express their ideas cogently, with the view that all expression is a "draft thought", capable of challenge and alteration through discussion? This can occur in writing, but writing is likely to have already gone through a thought process before being produced. However, seen as a draft, writing can be seen as supportive of developmental "conversation", orally or through effective marking.

Therefore talk appears, to me, to be a major component of learning experience. To make real progress in learning, learners need to make sense of both what they know and how they know it, orally and through appropriate recording. They need to have a confidence in their relationship with a teacher to ensure they become independent producers, not just passive consumers of learning.

We talk of learning journeys for children. It is possible to use the idea of a journey to support a child's articulation of what they are thinking and reflecting on how their ideas have changed. Essentially the learner becomes the storyteller of an episode of learning, using recount in as detailed a form as possible to put across an idea. Storyboarding, or developmental notes, can support the expressive process. Their audience, members of the class, including the teacher, can ask for clarification and provide feedback. Learning thereby becomes a collegiate project.

Working with a year two class, I asked a group of children to unpick how they thought their way through a multiplication equation, step by step instructions, which they then asked a peer to follow, as a check mechanism. This produced quite deep discussions and ironed out a number of misconceptions on the way, especially as they were identified and then easily addressed.

Science with a year four class entailed a challenge to set up a fair test to find the best paper to send a parcel through the post. Having had earlier experience of fair tests, groups of four were given time to come up with a proposal of how to proceed with the test, then time to present this to others. Shared thinking ironed out issues and allowed all to proceed effectively.

Thinking is supported by language and language is further developed by articulating thinking. Talking things through is the means by which children's understanding of their own learning is deepened.

So, can the fundamentals of education be expressed as thinking and talking, then refining thinking?

We talk in terms of a thought process, not a thought product, but there can be a product of thought. So the act of thinking is a process, not an end in itself. The challenge to think around a problem, to analyse and make a judgement about how to proceed, to order and organise a coherent plan of action, to carry out the action with record keeping embedded, then to review and evaluate the process and the outcome, suggesting areas for re-assessment, are higher order thinking skills leading to potentially different outcomes . To give a group of children a "recipe" to be followed is a lower order set of skills, following instructions, leading to thirty exact copies. The former approach leads to questions such as "How do I….?" rather than "I can't….." These two responses suggest, in the first example, the need for a skill as identified by the independent learner, while the second can suggest a block and dependence.

Within these areas, **are teachers and supporting adults the barriers to learning**? It is very arguable that they may become so, often inadvertently, by designing inappropriate tasks that cover all the children, in so doing potentially limiting a number of learners and over-challenging others. The implications for classroom practice can be great, particularly in resource terms, cost, access and use. The first can be limited by the use of recycled materials, or no cost collections, such as newspapers, boxes and so on. Storage and access need to be overcome. Thirty children all needing the same materials at the same time will cause chaos, unless there is clear organisation for use and return. Resources across the curriculum need to be in the classroom, easily accessible and available to be selected by children in their need to solve a problem.

Support staff, often concerned that the children for whom they are responsible have to fulfil the

task as set by the teacher can become actively involved, in the more extreme cases actually taking over from the child to finish the activity. This can be the case in an art activity, especially activities such as cards for a special occasion. Why can't Teaching Assistants be deployed with groups to allow independent tasks to be undertaken with an overseer as observer?

Editing and improvement are an integral part of the problem-solving, process-based approach to learning. Children need to learn that the end point form an activity is capable of assessment and qualitative judgements, to learn from errors and to make good in a subsequent opportunities.

Children's self-assessment can include the identification of skills that need to be further refined, some physical, some organisational, some technical. Mental reordering is a natural aspect of learning. We come across new facts all the time and simply reorder to accommodate the new, sometimes after thought and reflection and some heartache as long held views are challenged. By comparison with other outcomes, they can build their own conceptualisation of the qualities needed, so that these embedded understandings support their next efforts.

In all aspects of learning, the teacher holds the key to success. Reducing learning to the mechanics and simplicities of memorisation will not, in itself create learners. The application of what is learned in practical, problem solving situations allows the learner to hone skills, to identify areas for further practice and to be proud of the end product, after review and evaluation and a willingness to engage again with the problem if needed.

Homework can enable this approach to become more of a reality, if the teacher uses home time as the place for ideas development, early drafting and collecting ideas together, so that more informed discussion about the process details can take place in the classroom, such as consideration of materials collected, review of drafts and discussion of improvements. Put the quality discussion into the classroom.

What's in a name? Homework, Home-school activity or "bridging task"?

There is no purpose in homework which will not be marked or play any part in future learning. It is then just a variation of busy work, put in place because someone said it should be done. It can be a cause of much stress, between child and parent, as well as home and school. So, what is the point of homework?

Traditional homework in Primary schools has included learning multiplication tables, spellings and reading to an adult. Worksheets are sometimes sent home with an activity following a lesson. Homework is usually given on a specific day each week, communicated to parents beforehand, so becomes a part of the weekly routine. As a result it can become a very repetitive activity, with activities deemed to be homework, for it's own sake.

It is debatable whether the activity is valued and supported in every household. Intervention, interest and investment of time by "a significant adult"(Vygotsky)will determine whether the activities will a)be accomplished and b) have a positive impact on learning.

What if "homework" became a "bridging task", with a clear rational purpose articulated to the learners and parents when set, to show that there was a point in it's completion? Would the outcomes be more purposeful activity being set and more effort given to the task?

Best home-school practices are promoted ahead of time. Parents are well prepared for the home activity event, either by word of mouth, through the children or pre-empted by a half termly newsletter detailing what to expect, with weekly follow up as necessary. Schools with different heritage languages make provision for parents to know what to expect.

What works? Tables, number bonds, spellings that have been worked on and practised in school, to be taken and memorised and books that can be read fluently so that they promote reading for enjoyment, hopefully shared with an interested adult. Home school books, where the reading journey is shared between teacher and parent are a valuable addition. Guidance bookmarks with reading expectations of a particular book or series allows guided conversations after reading.

Every teacher should have in mind the potential for activity to be undertaken at home which can add value to class time.

- **Oracy and articulacy** should be enhanced by any home activity, as they all should be capable of being discussed.

- **First draft writing**- Instead of spending an extended period of time in class writing the first draft, done at home, the follow up activity can focus on editing and improvement, leading to a second draft at home.

- **Research**- Setting a key question, which can promote an aspect of a subject or topic and enhance a subsequent lesson. Go home and find out...... Go home and ask.....We'll use the information on.......

- **Reading ahead of time**. Take home a prepared piece of reading to extract significant points to support a discussion at a later date. (Flipping the classroom)

- **Reflective activity**. What do you think about>>>?

- **Maths.** Measure, count, collect information, how big, how many, how often? Bring back and use in data handling.

- **Geography**. Draw carefully, with measurements, a plan of..... your lounge/garden/ etc. Walk home and then draw a sketch plan of the journey.

- **History**. A My-story project. Find a set of five pictures from your own life and talk about them with an adult, to come back to school and tell your story.

Art. Everywhere!

Consider talking homework

The principle is a very simple one. Send home something worth talking about, which then has a direct link back into a future piece of school activity. If it true that learning is strengthened by teaching an idea to someone else, then to enhance home life through focused talk would seem to have potential dividends.

- At **Early Years** stage the teacher could, just before home time, remind the children what has been done during the day and ask them to talk to the adult picking them up about it.

- **EYFS and later infant years** could be sent home with a prompt question to be discussed, some exploration of an idea or a picture to be discussed and words collected, all with the purpose of feeding into a subsequent piece of talk-led writing.

- They could devise a plan to achieve something, explore a topical subject, eg listen to the news together.

- **Juniors** could be given the task of creating the storyboard for a story and then rehearsing the story with an adult.

- If there is the facility for sharing writing between home and school, then the production of early drafts could be as a result of parent/child collaboration, with editing and improvement at school.

- They could also engage with an interested adult/peer to explain an area of learning, with a short, 100 word précis, or diagrammatic notes of the discussion.

- Finding out information, or considering a more philosophical idea, to talk about and share.

In that way, a form of rehearsal might fix those parts that the child has deemed to be important to retain and perhaps to fill in the gaps by seeking to explain the idea aloud.

Drafting ideas would save valuable school time for improvement. The teacher could then focus on those aspects, where feedback can really impact on learning.

Teachers are always learning, about their subject areas of interest and the children who make up their classes.

With expertise available to them outside their classroom and outside their schools, for much of their career they will oscillate between apprenticeship and mastery different areas of need. Apprenticeship is a useful analogy, with reflective practice at the centre of personal development.

The phases of apprenticeship are:-

1) Modelling. Showing the bigger picture to demonstrate both the skills and processes. Reflection

2) Approximating. Trial and error phase, copying the original. Reflection.

3) Fading. The master "fades" as the student tries more alone. Reflection.

4) Self-directed learning. Learning by doing. Finding the points where reference to master or other source is necessary. Reflection and refinement.

5) Generalising. Bringing to bear the experiences from a range of sources to make personal use of a broad range of skills and knowledge. Reflection, refinement and creativity.

Apprentice synonyms include learner, novice, disciple and pupil, with disciple suggesting discipline, external and self-imposed.

So how does this all help learning and teaching?

We need to have a clear picture of where the learning is going and share it (whole picture), make activities enjoyable and social where possible (context), engage fully within the process (including purposeful observation) and tweak as necessary giving supportive feedback, review at different points to keep a steer on the direction of travel.

We all, at some stage, have the need to look something up, ask a friend or colleague, when we get to a point where we are "stuck" with an idea. The notion of apprenticeship offers the potential for this to happen.

Design and technology approaches are well suited to this end, as they offer the chance to identify the "resource tasks" to prepare for "capability or challenge tasks", where the skills are developed and refined within real-life projects. Other subjects have their equivalents.

The principle is, "You need to know r be able to do this to be able to do that", and that probably sums up a lot of education, the use and application of knowledge, or a sequence of skills or capabilities that define a subject.

The problem is often that knowledge and skills are identified and taught outside a useful context, so in the absence of application, the skill falls into disuse.

The hallmark of good education is the progressive building of capacity, coupled with the learner's developing confidence to tackle personal needs as they are highlighted.

Becoming a great teacher is a process. Taking taught elements, putting them into place through your own understanding, engaging with the process and evaluating the outcomes is the means by which teachers get progressively better. There is a growing number of virtuosi teachers, having been successful in their careers though a process often of trial and error, which they may not evidence, who wish to capitalise on their success by capturing their wisdom in a book and sharing the recipe of success.

It is often the case that the acolyte cannot match the master because they have not gone through the thought processes leading up to the mastery, so they short circuit the process in the search for the ultimate product, reducing the impact in their own classrooms. Where teaching is poor, it is often the result of a poor copyist, reliant on the efforts of others, so becoming a stereotype, incapable of responding to the lesson that is not going where intended, but unable to change through lack of insight.

Assessment tips

In many ways, assessment embodies much of the art and science of being a teacher, in that it is the personal responses and judgements about situations that arise within a learning experience that might be the subject of more detailed thinking after the event, leading to alterations in plans or presentation in a subsequent lesson.

in continuing to think about what the actual act of assessment entails, I started to tweet some basic "tips", all premised on the principle of **knowing the children well and getting to know them even better**.

#assessmenttip 1 Watch what children are doing. Spot the difference between today and yesterday/last week/month. Identify and celebrate.

Observation is a key skill in assessment. Watch any EYFS practitioner and they will be very busy looking closely at what the children are doing in response to a stimulus. They may be capturing their observations in note form or through digital photos and notes. I'd always advise an ITE student, or a NQT to get their heads up and look around the classroom, to see what is happening. Avoid the head down and close focus with a group, to the detriment of the children.

#assessmenttip 2 Get children to talk about what they are doing. Ask questions to clarify and explore their thinking. Ask questions to deepen and to challenge unclear responses.

Questioning is the means by which children can be encouraged to explain and explore what they think. This can be scaffolded to the needs of the subject or personalised to the needs on an individual child. Open and closed questions will support different types of thinking.

#assessmenttip 3 Engage in what they are producing, both in terms of appropriate skill and also the detail of the outcome. Check, advise...

Unless children are engaged with during a lesson, the teacher has to rely on the end product to form opinions. This can then mask a multitude of issues, which could ensure that a wrong impression is given, creating a learning gap that may only become apparent at a later stage.

#assessmenttip 4 Keep records, be aware of outcomes that can show developing patterns that might require deeper engagement.

#assessmenttip 5 Ask questions that need answers to show clearly what a child "knows" (at the point of testing)

#assessmenttip 6 If in doubt, work closely with individuals, observe, talk, question, clarify, reflect, repeat as necessary.

Where a child is not meeting the teacher expectations, it is incumbent on the teacher to explore more fully what might be contributing to the problems. This might involve diagnostic marking, deeper discussions, enabling the child to explore the identified issues and to come up with possible ways forward.

#assessmenttip 7 Broaden your understanding of children's outcomes to balance your judgement, especially at the upper/lower margins.

This is probably key to decision making. It is easy to get caught in the culture of a particular school, or within specific parts of a school; eg always teaching KS1 in a Primary school. Learning is a journey though different years of a school. Knowing what has gone before and what will come after allows teachers to tailor their teaching to a known position. A teacher new to the profession will not cary with them a broad understanding of children's outcomes. That is one reason why I'd advocate for a National Exemplar portfolio, or at least a school level portfolio, so that specific journeys can be moderated against a broader perspective.

#assessmenttip 8 Create learning challenge that enables children to demonstrate looked for skills and knowledge.

#assessmenttip 9 Know children, plan challenge, engage learners, advise, adjust to need, check outcomes, know children better. Refine next challenges.

#assessmenttip 10 Sit down, think of a child, sum up what you know about him/her and what you need to know next. Repeat for class.

#assessmenttip 10a Write a class list. Who gets remembered early? Who gets forgotten?

I will always remember, early in my career, sitting down to write class reports and thinking I had finished, counted up the reports to find one child missing. At that point I decided that no child would ever be invisible again.

#assessmenttip 11 Write down essential information, to collate over time, to determine patterns. You can't remember everything.

#assessmenttip 12 Recognise limits of your own skill. Use skill, knowledge and experience of others to extend/enhance, to benefit learners.

Children are the responsibility of the school as a whole, even if they are in your class for a year or so. Others will have insights that will supplement your own. If a child is getting under your skin, then a chance to download with a colleague might just put everything into perspective.

#assessmenttip 13 If you can't remember all the targets and the details of what you want from each and every child, tweak your work books, so that they become personal learning organisers.

Simple fold out slips help both you and the children to remember what they need to focus on.

Responsive teaching; food for thought

Where the product is the main focus, the process can be short-circuited, with a recipe style approach to the process.

Talking about wider experiences enables learning to develop and become embedded appropriately within individuals.

Experience, Explore and Explain; foundation subjects are essential for vocabulary, or every lesson is an English lesson.

If children have something to think about, then talk about, isn't it easy to see that they might then have something to write about?

Probably the most essential, aspect of learning is communication, from and between participants, whether overt, as in conversation and discussion, or internally through reflection on an idea, with opportunities to explore thinking through dialogue.

For, potentially, a large number of children, whether from an English or other heritage background, the classroom is the most significant language environment that they will encounter.

Learners who are enabled to be articulate offer a purposefully listening teacher the chance to share and explore their models of thought, by getting learners to unpick their thought process.

Talk supports oral rehearsal for writing, where ideas are considered and refined, drafted and redrafted after feedback and reflection.
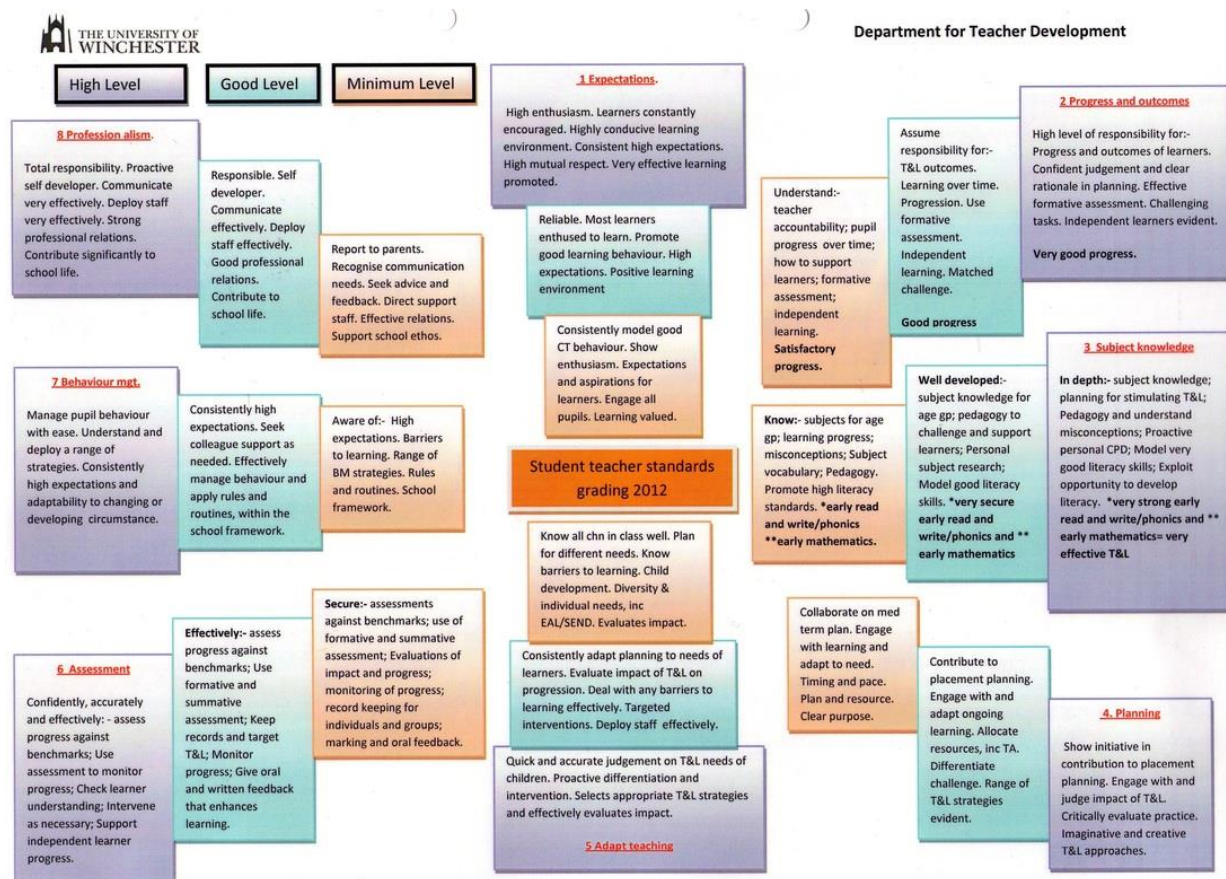
Children's self-assessment can include the identification of skills that need to be further refined, some physical, some organisational, some technical.

What's in a name? Homework, Home-school activity or "bridging task"?

The hallmark of good education is the progressive building of capacity, coupled with the learner's developing confidence to tackle personal needs as they are highlighted.
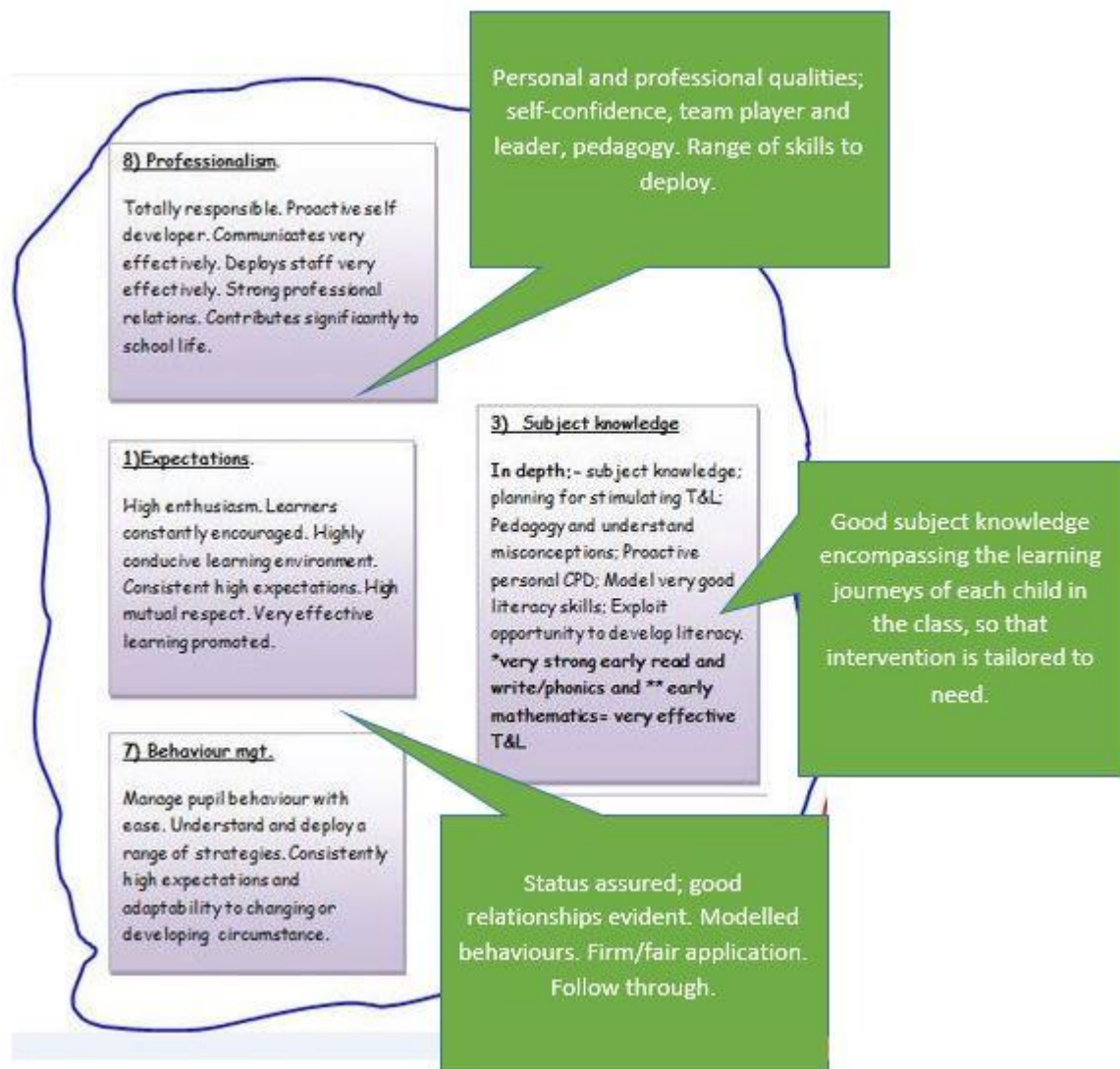
24652; the answer is in here somewhere

I'm not disclosing my bank pin number, but the Teacher Standards that, to me, make the significant difference to learning, and learning discussions.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER — **Department for Teacher Development**

High Level | Good Level | Minimum Level

8 Profession alism.
Total responsibility. Proactive self developer. Communicate very effectively. Deploy staff very effectively. Strong professional relations. Contribute significantly to school life.

Responsible. Self developer. Communicate effectively. Deploy staff effectively. Good professional relations. Contribute to school life.

Report to parents. Recognise communication needs. Seek advice and feedback. Direct support staff. Effective relations. Support school ethos.

1 Expectations.
High enthusiasm. Learners constantly encouraged. Highly conducive learning environment. Consistent high expectations. High mutual respect. Very effective learning promoted.

Reliable. Most learners enthused to learn. Promote good learning behaviour. High expectations. Positive learning environment

Consistently model good CT behaviour. Show enthusiasm. Expectations and aspirations for learners. Engage all pupils. Learning valued.

Student teacher standards grading 2012

Assume responsibility for:- T&L outcomes. Learning over time. Progression. Use formative assessment. Independent learning. Matched challenge.
Good progress

Understand:- teacher accountability; pupil progress over time; how to support learners; formative assessment; independent learning. Satisfactory progress.

2 Progress and outcomes
High level of responsibility for:- Progress and outcomes of learners. Confident judgement and clear rationale in planning. Effective formative assessment. Challenging tasks. Independent learners evident.
Very good progress.

7 Behaviour mgt.
Manage pupil behaviour with ease. Understand and deploy a range of strategies. Consistently high expectations and adaptability to changing or developing circumstance.

Consistently high expectations. Seek colleague support as needed. Effectively manage behaviour and apply rules and routines, within the school framework.

Aware of:- High expectations. Barriers to learning. Range of BM strategies. Rules and routines. School framework.

Know:- subjects for age gp; learning progress; misconceptions; Subject vocabulary; Pedagogy. Promote high literacy standards. *early read and write/phonics **early mathematics.

Well developed:- subject knowledge for age gp; pedagogy to challenge and support learners; Personal subject research; Model good literacy skills. *very secure early read and write/phonics and ** early mathematics

3 Subject knowledge
In depth:- subject knowledge; planning for stimulating T&L; Pedagogy and understand misconceptions; Proactive personal CPD; Model very good literacy skills; Exploit opportunity to develop literacy. *very strong early read and write/phonics and ** early mathematics= very effective T&L

6 Assessment
Confidently, accurately and effectively: - assess progress against benchmarks; Use assessment to monitor progress; Check learner understanding; Intervene as necessary; Support independent learner progress.

Effectively:- assess progress against benchmarks; Use formative and summative assessment; Keep records and target T&L; Monitor progress; Give oral and written feedback that enhances learning.

Secure:- assessments against benchmarks; use of formative and summative assessment; Evaluations of impact and progress; monitoring of progress; record keeping for individuals and groups; marking and oral feedback.

Know all chn in class well. Plan for different needs. Know barriers to learning. Child development. Diversity & individual needs, inc EAL/SEND. Evaluates impact.

Consistently adapt planning to needs of learners. Evaluate impact of T&L on progression. Deal with any barriers to learning effectively. Targeted interventions. Deploy staff effectively.

Quick and accurate judgement on T&L needs of children. Proactive differentiation and intervention. Selects appropriate T&L strategies and effectively evaluates impact.

5 Adapt teaching

Collaborate on med term plan. Engage with learning and adapt to need. Timing and pace. Plan and resource. Clear purpose.

Contribute to placement planning. Engage with and adapt ongoing learning. Allocate resources, inc TA. Differentiate challenge. Range of T&L strategies evident.

4. Planning
Show initiative in contribution to placement planning. Engage with and judge impact of T&L. Critically evaluate practice. Imaginative and creative T&L approaches.

The teaching standards began to tell a story, to me, especially arranged into the dartboard that I developed for Winchester University ITT department. The 8 standards, if used as a list, can become tick sheets to be completed, but they don't necessarily tell a holistic narrative about what it means to be a complete teacher. However, if they are regrouped, they begin to create an interesting developmental narrative.

In the first group, there are descriptors of the individual and the personal and professional strengths that are likely to have been evidenced at interview. An articulate, open and honest colleague, prepared to use their strengths to support and enhance the efforts of the group, who develops status with the pupils in the school and establishes good working relations with parents. They have good subject knowledge; in Primary, across the wide range of subjects that make up the broad and balanced curriculum that should be an aspiration.
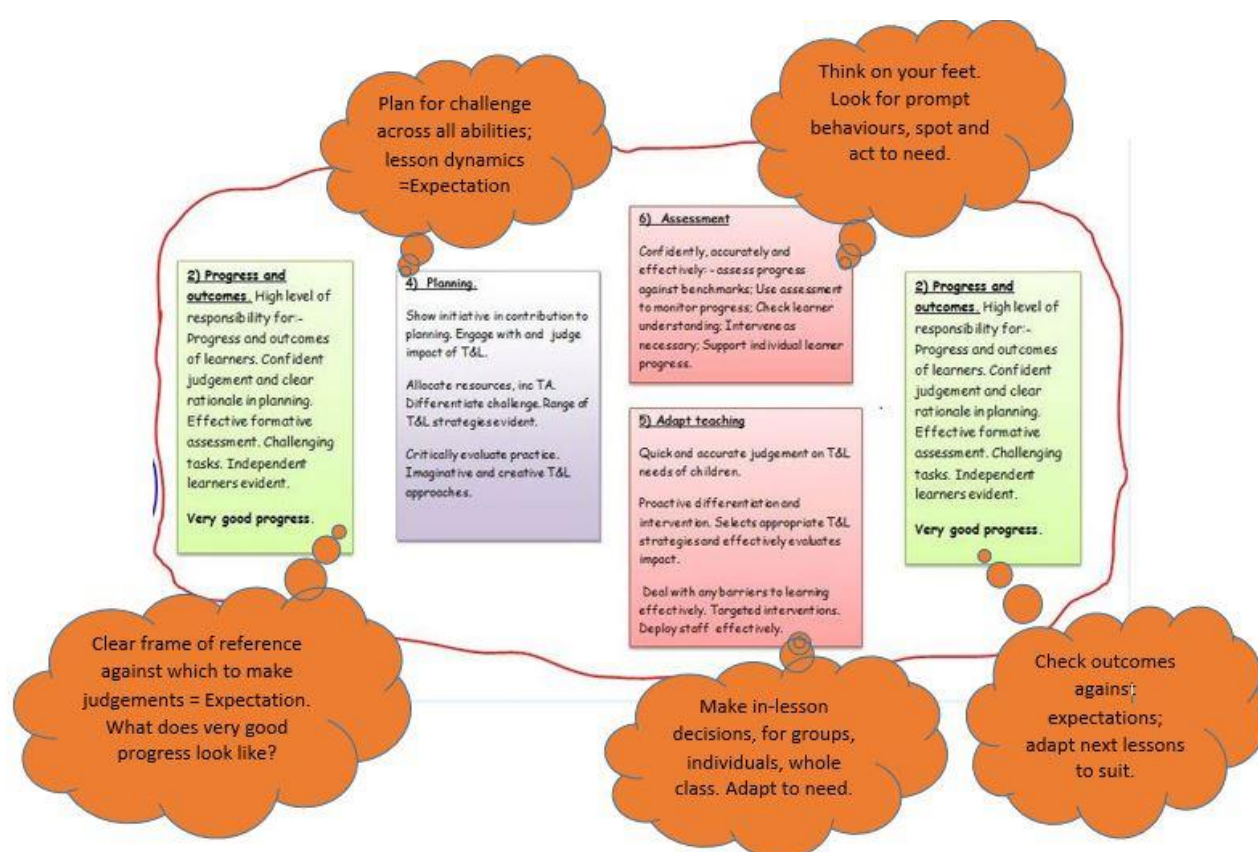
Personal and professional qualities; self-confidence, team player and leader, pedagogy. Range of skills to deploy.

8) Professionalism.

Totally responsible. Proactive self developer. Communicates very effectively. Deploys staff very effectively. Strong professional relations. Contributes significantly to school life.

1) Expectations.

High enthusiasm. Learners constantly encouraged. Highly conducive learning environment. Consistent high expectations. High mutual respect. Very effective learning promoted.

3) Subject knowledge

In depth:- subject knowledge; planning for stimulating T&L; Pedagogy and understand misconceptions; Proactive personal CPD; Model very good literacy skills; Exploit opportunity to develop literacy. *very strong early read and write/phonics and ** early mathematics= very effective T&L

Good subject knowledge encompassing the learning journeys of each child in the class, so that intervention is tailored to need.

7) Behaviour mgt.

Manage pupil behaviour with ease. Understand and deploy a range of strategies. Consistently high expectations and adaptability to changing or developing circumstance.

Status assured; good relationships evident. Modelled behaviours. Firm/fair application. Follow through.

The second grouping of standards describes the in-lesson relationship between the teacher and the learners. The lesson plan will have been informed by good knowledge of the children, their current learning achievements, their learning attributes and the expectation/aspiration of progress. Progress, outcomes and expectations are the stuff of planning. The short term planning of a lesson, or short series of lessons will have an appropriate short-term series of expectations, with a clear description of anticipated progress, across the range of abilities. These expectations will be embedded within tasks that should provide an appropriate level of developmental challenge to each learner.

Once the lesson is planned, and in the teacher and TA minds, there is often little reference made to the plan as the lesson gets under way. The expectations are articulated through a variety of means, the Learning Objective or WALT (We Are Learning To), supported by Success Criteria, or WILF (What I'm Looking For) or sometimes Steps To Success, as well as within the task challenge.

It is interesting to consider where the steps come from. Good subject knowledge will include developmental steps in a naturalistic way. Steps were described, in the last National Curriculum, as level descriptors, often skill based, but within the context of a content curriculum. The level descriptors a layer of use and application of knowledge that offered the potential to challenge

children once they showed a capability and security of knowledge. Every school in which I have worked since 1971 has had a planned curriculum. Admittedly, for a number of years, maths and English might be structured within a central scheme, with choice in topics and other areas, but, when the original National Curriculum was audited within my school, as Deputy Head, we had a 90% correspondence between the current and new expectations. Subsequent revisions, within my time as headteacher, were at a 95% correspondence level; a common situation among my local area schools. Decision making in classrooms, within the current incarnation of the National Curriculum, have been challenged, with significant emphasis on English and Maths, at the expense of what are deemed foundation subjects. There is a significant interplay between the foundation subjects and English and Maths, where they provide the contextual background for understanding literature, provide contexts within which interesting narratives can be developed and for using and applying the discrete knowledge that derives from the core lessons.

Plan for challenge across all abilities; lesson dynamics =Expectation

Think on your feet. Look for prompt behaviours, spot and act to need.

2) Progress and outcomes High level of responsibility for:- Progress and outcomes of learners. Confident judgement and clear rationale in planning. Effective formative assessment. Challenging tasks. Independent learners evident.

Very good progress.

4) Planning.

Show initiative in contribution to planning. Engage with and judge impact of T&L.

Allocate resources, inc TA. Differentiate challenge. Range of T&L strategies evident.

Critically evaluate practice. Imaginative and creative T&L approaches.

6) Assessment

Confidently, accurately and effectively: - assess progress against benchmarks; Use assessment to monitor progress; Check learner understanding. Intervene as necessary; Support individual learner progress.

5) Adapt teaching

Quick and accurate judgement on T&L needs of children.

Proactive differentiation and intervention. Selects appropriate T&L strategies and effectively evaluates impact.

Deal with any barriers to learning effectively. Targeted interventions. Deploy staff effectively.

2) Progress and outcomes High level of responsibility for:- Progress and outcomes of learners. Confident judgement and clear rationale in planning. Effective formative assessment. Challenging tasks. Independent learners evident.

Very good progress.

Clear frame of reference against which to make judgements = Expectation. What does very good progress look like?

Make in-lesson decisions, for groups, individuals, whole class. Adapt to need.

Check outcomes against expectations; adapt next lessons to suit.

The teacher does need to have a good understanding of the potential progress and outcomes that apply to the children in the class. Too many lessons founder on this lack, if the teacher cannot bridge the gap between the current and next learning, or to make judgements about the progress that has been made within a lesson. These are the rapid fire decisions that a teacher makes throughout a day, with experience enabling more rapid engagement.

This set of decisions informs the teacher-child discussion, unpicking areas of concern, providing the basis for feedback, guidance and coaching. Where learners are not achieving as expected, or greater than expected, the teacher needs to tweak the demand up or down, dependent on the need, if the intervention suggests this.

In lesson judgements need to be a source of reflection by the teacher, to ensure that the task demand was appropriate, too challenging, or not sufficiently stretching.

Teaching is a judgement call, throughout the process.

The quality of teacher judgement is paramount. At the outset, and especially in ITT, there is a clear need to understand the process of learning across a range of subjects, with mental exemplars as reference points, the alternative being to see the child's exercise books as developmental portfolios, where the interactions, including the marking and feedback enable the learning journey to be visible, but also capable of articulation, as to achievement and next steps. Without the steps being clear, understandable and capable of being enacted by the child, progress may not occur.

The standards, in essence, offer the following interpretations

- 2; **Know your children**, and know what to expect from children, of a similar age, so that appropriate decisions can be made about challenge within planning, over time.

- 4; **Plan effectively**, over a reasonable timescale, to ensure curriculum coverage, but also to take account of the range of abilities involved. In the first instance, this may well be a form of hypothesis, against which in-lesson interactions will clarify the basis for expectations.

- 6; **Think on your feet**. You have set challenges, and need to engage with individuals, especially those whose learning behaviours prompt you to act.

- 5; Where necessary, **adjust the challenge** so that every child has an opportunity to succeed and to make some progress.

- 2; **Reviews after the lesson** will show with greater clarity the specific abilities of the children in the context of that lesson. Moderated against other class outcomes allows a deeper understanding still, especially in terms of clarifying expectations.

Repeating this cycle enables ever greater refinement of challenge and understanding of what your children can achieve. For specific groups and individuals, the nature of challenge may well become investigative, to discover the extent of any areas that appear to be less than secure, or to ascertain the extent of ability or talent.

This issue can manifest itself in many ways. A trainee may not have a secure understanding of child development, especially across a range of subjects, in a Primary setting, nor will they have a specific knowledge of the class in front of them. Equally, an experienced teacher transferring from one year group to another, while having expertise from the previous experiences, may well struggle on both counts, as with the trainee, but hopefully can bring insights that speed up the acquisition of knowledge.

Putting together the needs of the curriculum with the needs of the children is the bread and butter of teaching and learning, as it does embed the skills of assessment. This, as I have argued previously, requires a Frame of Reference against which to make judgements. Insecurity with the curriculum demands, the assessment needs and the personal needs of children, especially at the SEN end of the spectrum are all currently in play.

Planning, especially plans used dynamically over the medium term, can enable a rapid recycling of

24652, to ensure that teacher and child confidence can grow, enabling all to move forward with enthusiasm.
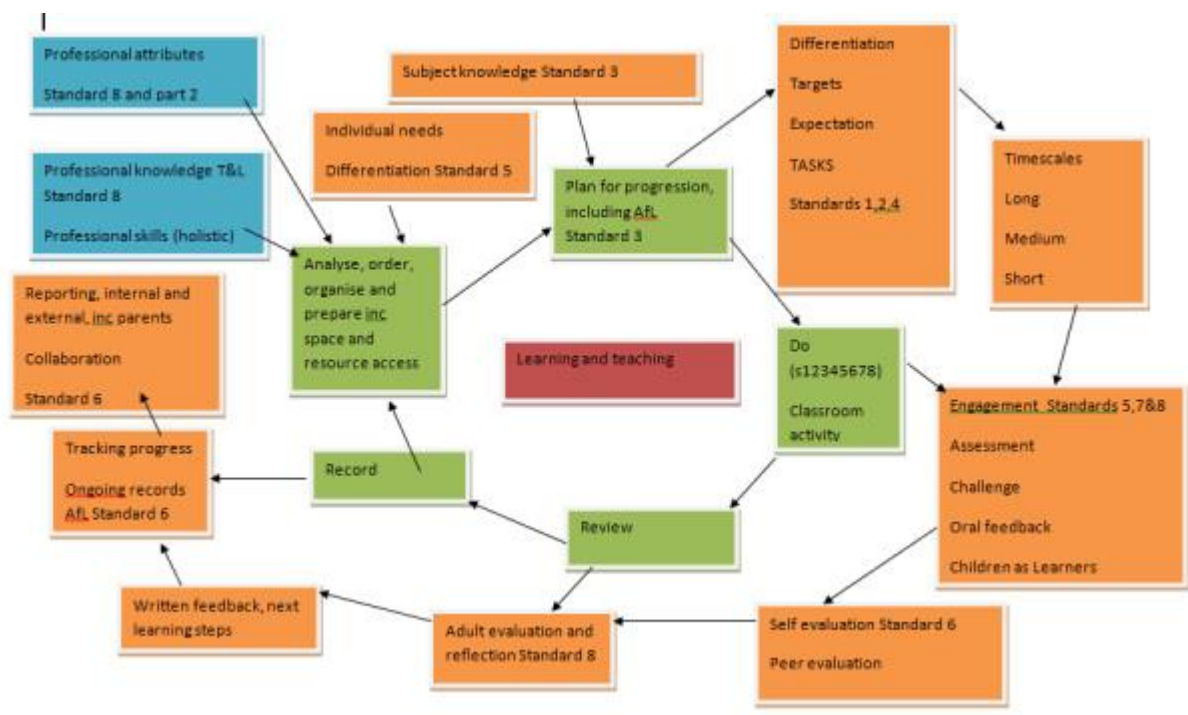
The bottom line is to know your children, well. Upon this knowledge, the whole teaching and learning edifice depends. Or it is a "house of cards".

65; getting a little close

Why 65? Not because I might be heading that way, but because teaching standard 6 is assessment, while 5 is adaptation, but I like to think of them, in practice, as 6-know your children and think on your feet and 5-spot and deal with issues as they become evident, with a post-lesson review that essentially is a case of "Did they get it, can I go on, or do we go back?"

Assessment, within the current National Curriculum, is, at best unhelpful, at worst simply a "dog's breakfast", the decision to not have a national system, but to tell schools to develop their own, were introduced without considering the impact on teacher workload.

Below is a diagram that outlines the range of activities regularly undertaken by a teacher. This is an attempt to describe day to day thinking, beyond which there are many other areas that demand time.

I have long argued that assessment, as teacher decision making, underpins all teacher activity; it is essentially how teachers get to know the children in their class(es).

Once there was a National Curriculum (NC) with associated levels that sought to describe differences in performance between children. As a Primary deputy head at the time, the 1987 incarnation of the NC described clearly the curriculum that could largely be seen in a good Primary School, so the adjustment was to understand and incorporate the level or progress descriptors into practice. In many cases, especially with an older workforce, discussion and moderation between colleagues

actually led to a rise in expectation and articulation of progress over the following years, even where there were occasional tweaks to the main curriculum framework. There was a commonality of professional language that was exemplified within the discussed outcomes. It led to a considerable improvement in teacher-child feedback and guidance, based on improved challenge within tasks.

The introduction of sub-levels and APP (Assessing Pupil Progress) as an extended version of progress descriptors led to practices that were almost self-defeating; it was hard enough to determine a difference between a good level 3 and a lower achieving 4, but to differentiate between top 3c and bottom 3b? There was also a narrowing of challenge, as teachers sought to create tasks that moved children a sub-level.

All this was losing sight of the bigger picture. In the attempt to create what passed as "rigour" at the time, there was a self-limiting of outcomes. The impact of this was to see the need for greater emphasis on "Literacy", not English and "Numeracy", not maths, to the growing detriment of other curriculum subjects, which, to my mind diminished the knowledge base available to children to enhance their vocabulary, spoken, read and written.

That was a significant factor in keeping a broad, balanced and relevant, experience and language rich curriculum until I stopped being a head in 2006. As a result, children achieved well across all areas, and, from parent reports, have gone on to high level achievements later.

Apparently, teachers and parents didn't understand levels, so that was a key reason why they disappeared. There is no doubt in my mind that they became badly used in some areas and were usually ignored at transfer to Secondary education. As they were "best fit", there was always the potential for gaps to proceed with children, which was why, in my school, we established the "flip out target sheet" that highlighted the ongoing learning need, even if a "level" had been achieved, on the premise that all 3b children will not be the same.

The current curriculum, especially for Primary schools, where assessment has been effectively written in as "achieve everything in the year expectation to be at the "right" standard".

Visiting trainee teachers in a range of schools across two counties, it can appear as if the range of approaches is likely to create a new set of issues. Some schools have systems that are akin to levelness, with associated APP style tracking documents. Some are guided by the LA to see children as "emerging" as they will not have completed the year programme. There are variations in interpretation within LA schools. Others are still trying to wade their way between systems, or are focused purely on outcomes, with little in the way of judgement; completing the activity is the important aspect.

It is also interesting to note that in a group of nine schools at a mentor meeting, there were seven different systems of assessment and tracking. This will, over time, create other layers of issues, as teachers may well seek to stay in a school or even in a year group in a school, because "they know the systems". It can appear to be a case of ever decreasing circles.

Issues that could arise: -

- The curriculum is not "covered", so, by definition, the children cannot be deemed to have fully "emerged". Even if the curriculum is covered, there is no guarantee that all the information "delivered" will be firmly embedded in every child's head.

- "Challenge" is often offered after a basic, "expected" task is tackled, so time may not be available to tackle the challenge, which, for some might be the more realistic start point. In many ways, the style can be seen to be moving back to a traditional, whole class, three-part lesson, with minor variations.

- The danger is of a delivery model that superficially ensures that all children will achieve. It could, in due course, result in "dumbing down" rather than creating a learning dynamic.

- The curriculum is very literacy and numeracy heavy, with less time available to do quality work in other curriculum subjects. This limits the knowledge and experience base that can contribute to a rich language environment.

- Being "top down" the controls on teachers' ability to innovate can sometimes seem restrictive. Breaking away from the control might push some institutions and individual teachers into anxiety territory. Fear restricts the ability to think.

- Some institutions interpret models into a second layer of expectation, further restricting the teacher ability to think for themselves. This, in turn, can restrict the children's ability to think for themselves.

- At significant points, children will be judged through external tests and given a number of "labels", based on their numeric standardised score, or in words, such as at, or not at standard. This is supposed to be better than the previous level system. Levelness has become de facto "yearness", with a possible "pass/fail" normative mentality overriding achievement.

- At transition/ in year transfer, children entering a new school, with a different system will potentially face some kind of overview assessment or test to determine their ability compared with their new peers.

- There will not be a common language between schools.

- Judgement on a broader scale could become more difficult, especially for vulnerable learners, whose descriptor of "emerging" **may not be sufficiently clear for accurate judgements to be made about personal capability**. It will be, is becoming easy for some teachers to articulate that a child "can't/shouldn't be in their class". Where they "should be" is another level of issue.

Teachers are paid to think about education, yet the top down system demanding compliance (or else) may actively be working against quality thinking, as teachers seek to second guess what "they" (LA, Academy chain, Ofsted, Government) actually want. Schemes are being created and bought that impose potentially further restrictions on thinking, as teachers seek to embed them in practice effectively. The curriculum is becoming more of a delivery mechanism. Why should that worry me?

- Largely because **standards 6 and 5 are the key to getting closer to individual, group and class needs**. The **judgemental aspects of standard 6, between and within lessons**, are effected through adaptations between lessons or within a lesson. That nuance can be lost in a delivery model. It is often evident in ITE trainees, who are focused on getting through the lesson more than the actual learning and getting to know the needs of individuals.

- Assessment, to my mind, has always meant **knowing your children**. It also means knowing the generic progression in each of the subjects that make up the Primary curriculum.

Marrying the two together is the essence of good planning that embeds appropriate challenge for different needs.

- **Planning is, at heart, a(n) hypothesis**, a general descriptor of what will happen if all your prior judgements have been accurate.

- All plans should be subject to **adjustment within the lesson**, if, on the **balance of evidence and the teacher judgement**, individuals, groups or the whole class seem to be finding aspects harder or easier than expected. In-lesson interactions and oral and written feedback are likely to be influenced by these judgements. **6&5 effectively mean spot and deal with learning issues in a lesson.**

- Reflection after the lesson, or period of lessons allows for **future plans to be adjusted to outcomes.** This could be in the form of "interleaving", or adjusting future demands to cater for known needs.

The agenda for school improvement, while laudable at one level, is also possibly deeply flawed. It is based on the premise that, "properly" delivered, the curriculum as written will result in a larger number of children achieving higher outcomes. Where there were approximately 75% of children achieving a level 4c+, there was an aspiration for 85% to achieve at what was described as 4b+, supposedly to better achieve at Secondary.

My feeling is that, in order to achieve at this level, curricular sacrifices will be made that impact negatively on the English outcomes, as children work with a reduced diet. In many ways, despite being adherents to the philosophy of E D Hirsch, the current direction of curriculum interpretations could actually be running counter to the aspiration of cultural literacy. I fully expect an HMI report in the next few years that says that Primary children are not getting a good deal in history, geography, proper Primary science, design technology and art.

If it was indeed the case that level 4b+ was the "grail", all that was needed were a few minor tweaks, learning from those who had already achieved at this level, despite contextual difficulty, eg the London Challenge, rather than the several years of change, which have not yet ceased, as the first tests are no due until this summer, with inevitable changes for the 2016-17 academic year.

That nothing is yet secured in education is worrying. While navigating stormy seas is part and parcel of school life, never to reach land and to be able to map clear directions leaves the system as a whole adrift.

Every teacher is adrift with a boat load of children. They deserve good maps and the ability to captain their own ships with certainty. They carry a valuable cargo, who should be enjoying time to look around and take in the experiences as they pass, rather than being kept too busy to look, or only allowed to see the world through a small port hole. The teacher, as a good captain, should also be looking out for the well-being of her team.

It needs leadership, direction and permission to address evident need, not dictat, exhortation and whip-cracking, with potential "punishment" (academisation) for not achieving.

Terminal testing; alternatives?

Children are tested on entry, at 6 and 7, then at 11, before transfer to Secondary school, where, if they do not reach the expected standard, they will retake that exam at the end of year 7.

Where the curriculum changed and removed the system of levels, the exams are a terminal judgement at the end of a period of study with an interesting terminology that graduates the fact that children are "at, or not at an expected standard", set by the Government.

This simple set of statements will inevitably be interpreted in some quarters as "pass and fail", in the same way as levels were used to make statements that 20% of children were illiterate at 11, despite many achieving a level 3, a reading age of 9. There is an argument that the changes will improve the system. That is still to be proven, over the next few years. In the meantime, the system has to learn to cope with standardised scores that imply accuracy, but which will provide no more information that before, so Secondary schools will continue to retest on entry.

No-one benefits from these changes, as few of the tests provide the basis upon which an individual can seek, or be helped, to make progress. The curriculum is general, despite considerable grammatical precision within the English aspects. Unless some kind of diagnosis occurs after the testing, it may not be clear in which areas a child did not reach the standard.

So a child could transfer to Secondary school with a generic number that will support a graduated list, but no detail to help the teacher decide on teaching needs.

When levels existed, there was, at one stage, an argument being made to treat them like music or driving exams, with a period of preparation against a known syllabus, with the test acknowledging success, qualities and sometimes areas for continued focus and development. The child would have been entered when the teacher felt that they were ready for a particular level. Such an approach would have supported Teacher Assessment, and in so doing improve teacher expectation and judgement.

We have moved more to an "all or nothing" terminal status, with schools, teacher, parents and children all edgy about the judgements that would be made on each and every one of the participants. There is just too much at stake on one point of learning.

While this may be a necessary "evil" at 16, probably now only at 18, earlier assessment could have been structured in a way that helped to identify strengths and areas for development, encouraging all participants to focus on specifics, rather than rely of global judgements like "pass" or "fail". I passed the 11 plus. My sister, within the same year group, didn't. The stigma lasted for a very long time.

If we really believe in character or resilience and "Growth Mindset", we need to address the needs of learners, rather than systematise everything and everyone. Some learn easier and faster than others. That is just a truism. Tracking the detail of individual need has always been a matter of concern, without levels, with levels and now with yearness replacing levelness. Children will still, even in the supposedly "mastery model" curriculum, transition from year to year with gaps in learning. Unless these gaps are tracked carefully and assiduously addressed, the system will become exactly as it was argued with "level" labels, except children will pass through some schools labelled as failures, form year one.

If the money spent on layer upon layer of testing was rationalised, with a return to personalised, developmental judgements, so that, at significant points, perhaps mid-year 1 and mid-year 4, diagnostic testing of a proportion of the school population supported teacher judgement and decisions, then Primary schools would have time to address specific needs, before transfer. In that way, learning difficulty might also be acknowledged more fully, with future decisions supported.

If it was a needed, a very simple end of year 6 test could be used to offer a piece of terminal work to the receiving secondary school, which they could explore through comparative means, establishing a transition baseline.

It is like this because the coalition Government decided to change the system. Any voices raised against it are likely to be worried for their children in a more uncertain education world. It is political will that puts schools under the pressure of achievement or academisation. The stakes are high.

There is always another management way, to create the conditions where schools and individuals thrive, make effort, accept coaching and learn from each other, in order to succeed as a team.

That'll do for education.

24652; the answer is in here somewhere; food for thought

Teaching is a judgement call, throughout the process.

The standards, in essence, offer the following interpretations

- 2; Know your children, and know what to expect from children, of a similar age, so that appropriate decisions can be made about challenge within planning, over time.
- 4; Plan effectively, over a reasonable timescale, to ensure curriculum coverage, but also to take account of the range of abilities involved. In the first instance, this may well be a form of hypothesis, against which in-lesson interactions will clarify the basis for expectations.
- 6; Think on your feet. You have set challenges, and need to engage with individuals, especially those whose learning behaviours prompt you to act.
- 5; Where necessary, adjust the challenge so that every child has an opportunity to succeed and to make some progress.
- 2; Reviews after the lesson will show with greater clarity the specific abilities of the children in the context of that lesson. Moderated against other class outcomes allows a deeper understanding still, especially in terms of clarifying expectations.

Repeating this cycle enables ever greater refinement of challenge and understanding of what your children can achieve.

We need a common language across all schools to understand the concept of progress, from exploration of progressive outcomes.

Standards 6 and 5 are the key to getting closer to individual, group and class needs. The judgemental aspects of standard 6, between and within lessons, are effected through adaptations between lessons or within a lesson.

Thinking beyond the classroom; extending your skill set

Teachers come out of their initial training, initially trained! They will have had a range of experiences in their training institution and their practice contexts that will have given them significant insights into what teaching is about. Like passing the driving test, to be passed as of sufficient quality to become a teacher is enhanced through continuous practice and experience, especially in inclement weather, when initial skills are often put to the test.

Significant areas for many early career teachers are the needs of children with enhanced abilities or greater personal need with some having defined special educational needs; the needs of specific individuals puts additional expectation on the teacher to adapt space, resources, challenge and support to cater for them.

Part of this can be addressed through moderating visits to classes above and below their current experience, to discover what was happening before and what will come next. This broadens the frame of reference of the teacher, so extending their perception of the class distribution.

We all have a personal frame of reference within which we operate. That is likely to be guided by the breadth of life experience, including career choices and the opportunities arising; people who have had a contribution, overtly through "direct teaching" or covertly by modelling aspects of personality to which one might aspire.

Other frames of reference include the rules and regulations which govern life in general, such as national laws, and the workplace, especially in teaching, where curricula and other aspects are centrally controlled.

Capability, the power or ability to do something; the extent of someone's or something's ability.

Ability; possession of the means or skill to do something; talent, skill, or proficiency in a particular area.

There is a positive feeling to the idea that "I can do this" and being able to apply those skills or the embedded knowledge within a practical situation. I would be concerned at any learner expressing the view that they couldn't do something. This view is often a result of an external view having had a negative impact. Young learners, by their nature, are growing and developing. There's always something that they cannot do; if these are regularly identified, is it any wonder that some learners carry a negative self-image?

As an adult, I am often acutely aware of my limitations, but have the capacity to address some shortfalls. I am aware that there is a significant group of excellent bloggers, with both knowledge and articulacy which I can envy. I can aspire to these models. Sometimes I will decide to use the skills of a much more competent person than me to achieve something, eg household electrics.

A Twitter chat, which I joined inadvertently, via a kind comment by @BeyondLevels, who suggested to others that I might have some insights into describing and tracking children's learning progress, allowed me to think again about issues for assessment of learning over the coming period. I am worried about the potential for a "babies and bathwater" approach, as the DfE issued a directive that levels were no more, but that schools should have their own systems to support judgements.

Establishing expectations of quality is essential.

It is really important for children to have examples that offer insights into what the expectations are within a task, in order to be able to visualise what they need to be able to do. Some will use WAGOLL walls (what a good one looks like) , working walls or broader displays, while others will use the visualiser and the interactive white board to demonstrate what is being sought.

I have marked university level submissions and had a very clear mark scheme against which to make judgements. There was some "wriggle room" within each criterion against which to give a mark. The total became the decider of the pass level. All work was second marked, to provide moderation of the original decisions.

My late first wife and a deputy head acted as a KS2 English SATs marker one year and had very clear mark guidance against which to judge. There was still embedded "wriggle room" that allowed a more subjective view to be scored. At the end of these processes the mark, level or grade was appended to a piece of work.

As a head, levelness descriptors were changed into can do statements, which allowed a descriptor to be built of what a level x learner looked like, which supported general decision making and guidance. I have often articulated **the need for a school exemplar portfolio approach** to support learner and teacher judgements and to exemplify the journey that needs to be taken. This was a feature of my school, supporting moderation of learning, as well as providing guidance to new teachers. Class books were regularly published simply, using photocopies stuck into scrap books.

For example, a year one child is likely to show; that they are enthusiastic for writing and are gaining confidence; can use phrases and simple statements to convey ideas; can make some choices about appropriate vocabulary; can compile lists, charts and is beginning to organise writing; can spell conventionally spelt words, especially CVC and common words spelt correctly; can write letters clearly shaped and correctly orientated; can use full stops and capital letters.

Whereas a year five or six child might show that they; can write extensive pieces of non-narrative writing; can use simple and complex sentences, organised into paragraphs; can achieve standard

spelling and accurate punctuation most of the time; can draft, redraft, revise and proof read independently or in collaboration with other pupils; can use paragraphs correctly, consistently and accurately; can be more discriminating about using a range of punctuation; can structures lengthy narrative logically; can depict atmosphere, character and setting.

Of course, as I write, best fit has been replaced with requirements to evidence all of the indicator skills, not a majority. This puts additional pressure on teachers approaching moderation, passed to children who have the need to demonstrate capabilities.

A Frame of Reference is essential to FORmative assessment judgements which for an inexperienced teacher is an important stage of personal development, adding to the sum of their understanding of child learning development.

If you know what you are looking for, you might just see it, or know that it isn't there.

The announcement of removal of levels had the potential for chaos as it removed a well-known frame of reference for progress judgements. The situation is likely to be different if comparing Primary and Secondary outlooks, the former being multi-subject generalists, the latter more likely to be specialists in one or possibly two subjects.

The danger of not having a frame of reference against which children can be judged across all schools is that there will be a whole array of assessment approaches, unique to the school, possibly bought in from an external provider.

At transition and transfer, receiving schools will need to understand the many different approaches being used, in order to understand the children transferring in. It is not yet clear what will happen to Primary end of Key Stage assessment and outcomes will be used effectively to promote further learning.

Alternatively, in some transitions, we will see outcomes from KS2 being ignored, with Secondary schools retesting to establish baselines from which progress in the school will be measured, as many now do.

Journeying is a well-used metaphor within education and can be very useful. Each year is a 39 week journey through a series of learning contexts, often linked into thematic studies or topics, as single or linked subjects. Within each of these topics, each child will be on a personal journey, from their current baseline to a future point. There must be an aspiration of this point to facilitate subsequent phases of learning, but this can never be expected, as some may not make the requisite steps.

Personal journeys need to be described, articulated appropriately to children, exemplified and modelled. This clear focus for learner and teacher will support in class interventions in learning, formative oral and written feedback and summative judgements. Whether the latter is essential for a learner is very debatable, but it can support data analysis.

Putting the expectations in front of learners keeps them, other adults and the teacher in touch with their current targets.
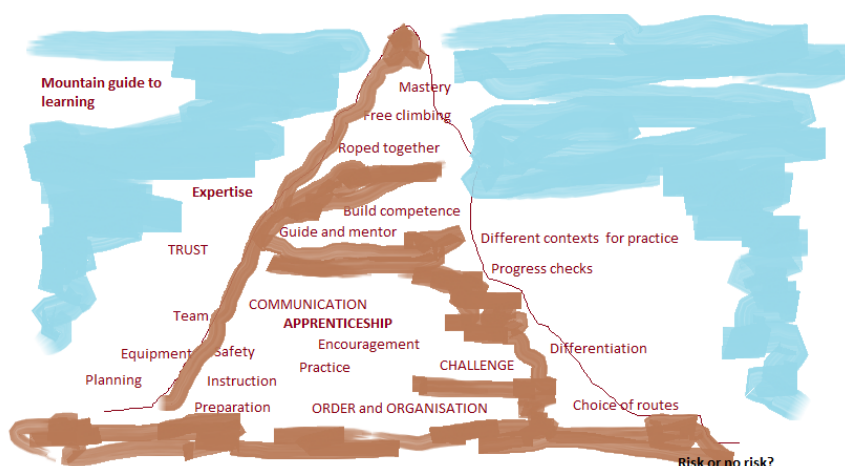
Learning should not be a secret journey.

Hopscotch or mountaineering metaphors.

Personal Everests.

Playing with ideas allows some tangential thinking to emerge. In seeking to avoid the linearity of many learning judgements, I proposed two possible metaphors, learning as hopscotch, or mountaineering. The former was an attempt to articulate the fact that learning is often slightly haphazard, rather than linear, and can involve a lot of jumping around for some children to make sense of their learning.

The latter, which I like very much as a clearer metaphor, I have often used as a start point, allowing the embedding of challenge, preparation of resources and guidance, potential risk and a role for the teacher as the guide and mentor to determine whether the child has to go back, stay still for a while or can go on, with some able to have a go at free climbing. The point of free climbing is likely to vary with the age and the nature of the challenge. If they can "fall off", there must be available some kind of safety net.

Climbing anecdote

When my son was four, we were on holiday in France and visited the river in the gorge of Jumilhac le Grand to picnic. There was a rock face which we all enjoyed clambering up, with a slightly more challenging route close by. Being a very agile child, it didn't take long before he started venturing towards the challenging face. It wasn't a problem to let him climb to a point where he could be lifted down, but one day he went a little higher and faster, just out of reach.

If I had shouted at him, panic might have caused him to fall, so I had to follow, with the intention of catching up. It is often harder descending than ascending a rock face, as it is had to see clear hand and foot holds, so, as he had gone one third of the way up, it was better, in my opinion, to keep going, this time will me climbing around him.

My nerves were shredded by the time we reached the top, but the look of elation on my son's face was amazing. He/we could have fallen, but that didn't cause him any concern. It was the thrill of the challenge and the pleasure of achievement which he was seeking.

(Learning) objective? Success criteria?

LO Climb a mountain. SC 1) able to follow step by step guidance; 2) roped to a leader, 3) roped, but leading yourself, 4) free climbing.

Long, cyclic professional discussions occur with LO/SC or WALT/WILF at the core. Teachers and schools should choose what works for them, as long as there is clear purpose articulated and the learners know, at least what they are doing, where they are going and why they are doing it.

I'd want learners to be able to articulate their personal understanding of the task and what they were trying to achieve.

In order to become partners in their own learning project, children need some sort of scaffold. They cannot be experts in learning and child development. That is the teacher role, along with holding onto the general direction of travel. Showing and sharing the journey allows learners to be aware of what progress looks like and the steps that they need to take in order to make it a reality.

If they know where they are going, they don't need to ask "Are we there yet?" and they might become life-long learners.

So, show them the point, show them the journey, give them an idea of what it might look like as a finished product, then offer the chance to undertake the journey, engage, question and guide with care, then evaluate and celebrate the outcomes, deciding what could have been improved (eg WWW-what worked well) and what still needs to be achieved (eg EBI-even better if).

By doing this, more active learners are enabled to become part of the process and can self-generate some learning, moving the teacher subtly to a coaching or detailed teaching role. Independence in a proportion of the class also allows the teacher to focus on those pupils who need greater scaffolding support.

SEND

Special Educational Needs (Disability) appears with regularity in my social media timeline, with, on one side, teachers saying how little training they have had to deal with that issue, as if it is a significantly separate aspect of teaching and on the other, those with some specialist background, in whose laps many of the problems are placed.

Changes to the organisation of SEND provision have been in train for the past few years, during which time I have blogged, as I have come across useful information. These blogs are archived within

the contents list of the blog, but I have extracted (some of) them to make what I hope is a more holistic document here. I have also assumed the position of the classteacher, rather than the SENCo, as it is the classteacher who has to become the front line teacher for children in the class, keeping a close eye on those individuals who are showing additional needs for adapted work and support.

Where I have focused on issues as they affect mainstream school teachers, I have also sought to develop a coherent, investigative approach that can fit with normal classroom practice, largely premised on the need to look, to reflect and record concerns to inform deeper conversations.

I am not looking to describe the range of individual needs that might be encountered. There are many expert colleagues who are much more able to offer insights into the specifics of individualised SEN(D).

SEN is the area of teaching and learning where teacher expertise may be challenged. This, in itself, is an indicator of potential learner need, but, for a teacher, can create a feeling of vulnerability.

There is always the possibility of meeting a child whose needs fall outside previous experience; the truism that "you've met one child with autism, so you've met one child with autism" can exemplify many areas of SEN. General statements like, "x cannot read", are unhelpful to discussion. Investigating and sharing specifically what a child can and cannot do can lead to focused intervention, rather than general approaches.

Leaving a child in a situation where they are clearly failing, are seen to be failing and know that this is the case, is destructive to the teacher and the child. Acknowledging specific issues and finding the specific means to address the issues demonstrates a positive approach for everyone to acknowledge.
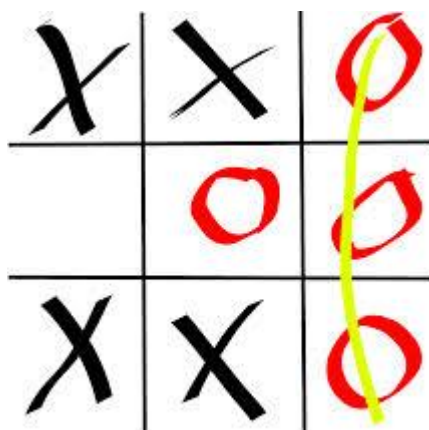
There is no doubt that, when a teacher encounters a child who does not fit the "normal mould" that they are used to, that they may experience unease. However, although it is possible for changes to occur later in life, as a result of illness, or a degenerative situation that suddenly becomes apparent, it is unlikely that special needs will be unknown to some extent, relatively early in a child's life, at home and (pre)school. Concerns will have been raised, by parents or professionals, which hopefully have been followed up and investigated, so that, by the time a child enters school there may already be substantial information available.

Inclusion is just doing your job

I would define Inclusion as seeking to effectively teach each and every child who enters your classroom. Each child will be known from earlier records, from preschool and parents on entry to school. Therefore, from the early stages of their education journey, teachers can analyse, prepare and begin to plan what they think are appropriate challenges and support structures for known cases. Plans should be adaptable to developing needs with challenge and support altered to evidence. I would amplify the word challenge, as it is easy to fall into the trap of considering needs to be lower level than reality.

On entry into the formal learning situation, the staff eyes and ears are alert to issues, noting down things that are said and done, to ensure that future reflections can be based on pattern finding or evidence across a range of issues. Evidence finding is the bread and butter of teacher life, in terms of interactions, questioning, feedback, support and outcomes.

TIC – Team including the child; TAC- Team around the child; TOE- Team of experts- a graduated approach to Special Needs?

For the uninitiated, noughts and crosses and tic tac toe are the same game, the first title being British. Derived from a Roman game, it is a game of strategy, with two players trying to block the other's moves.

However, it is not the game that interests me in the field of Special Needs, so much as the strategy.

Over my sixteen years as a headteacher, I had many discussions with parents expressing disquiet over the processes of the SEN system, particularly the hoops that they had to jump through in order to get some external views on their child. This was often particularly severe in the case of statements. Over time this became clearer with children having some kind of designation, Early Intervention, School Action, School Action Plus, with funding allocated to specific categories. There were still "blockages", mainly due to allocation of time by specialist services, but it was possible to develop a system which was understandable to all parties.

Reflecting after the event and also on the practices seen in a number of the schools, it would seem that a system based on the initials, rather than the strategy of Tic Tac Toe would be helpful.

TIC – Team including the child; TAC- Team around the child; TOE- Team of experts

It is arguable that all teams are teams around the child, but it is possible to visualise this as a journey that starts with detailed and recorded conversations between the teacher and child, develops with parent-child-teacher, then starts to involve a larger group of internal and external expertise in support of the child's development.

Essentially, the best systems create a series of safety nets through which, it is to be hoped, no child can slip.

There are many examples of these systems across inclusive schools, with a **common thread of high level communication** among all participants.

During a visit to a secondary school in Wiltshire, parents articulated the view that contact arrangements with school were very good. There was very good communication with the school staff, especially the Health and Welfare system and Individual Learning Department, with very quick response to queries. There was a quality and ease of access to teachers at all levels, including senior managers. The systems in the school supported their children. They valued the Parent mail system, improving regular contacts. Specific staff visited the home to support individual children. Work was provided for children when they had to at home for an extended period. The "time out" system allowed students with specific issues to self-refer to support.

The processes showed that Inclusion was a strength of the teaching and learning environment, with a range of dedicated staff allocated to support individuals, either in learning or their emotional security. A Multi Agency Forum had become, over a couple of years, a significant factor in the assurance of coordinated support action with external agencies. Developed with the aid of NCSL funding, this cluster met regularly to share good practice, which could be based around anonymous family case studies. It also gives a strong personal basis for Team Around the Child (TAC) as they become necessary to support individuals."

A primary school in Swindon demonstrated that the term "Team around the child (TAC)" was used on many occasions to summarise the staff approach to the individual needs of the children. The school created internal TACs to oversee the wellbeing and educational needs of vulnerable individuals.

Children were safe and secure, basic needs were assured, they felt well cared for by all staff, and had good self-esteem, thus creating the environment where they could make decisions, think for themselves and try, knowing learning is derived from attempting something.

At a secondary school in West London, the underlying philosophy was prefaced on the view that everyone is good at something and that all have the capacity to succeed in some form. The language of possibility was being articulated and lived through the students. Staff articulated the view that "We don't give up on the children" and evidenced this throughout the Academy, with SAFE staff suggesting that support continues after some individuals have left.

Students were safeguarded and had a very clear wrap-around system of support that ensured that, not only do they not "slip though the net", but were enabled to pursue their personal ambitions.

Children were discussed on a regular basis, eg Primary Phase class teacher, Safe worker and class worker roles, together with HS Safe workers, Key Stage Learning Leader role, Education Welfare Officer, Academy Counsellor all work together to ensure inclusion. Information is shared between them in weekly Every Child Matters Meetings.

There was much joined up thinking, with staff articulating their working relationships with others. This was particularly evidenced in conversation with the Academy Counsellor, EAL team member, JCS staff member and the year 8 SAFE worker, where each found ways to describe how they work together for the good of individual children. This was endorsed through other conversations focused on curriculum entitlement, where children are supported to succeed. All conversations had a focus of building capacity, taking personal responsibility, good communication, demonstrating that each child in this Academy had an identifiable Team Around each Child, always looking to enhance opportunities.

Hackney primaries held regular meetings across the three schools in the group, checking on the vulnerability of each child, with specific focus on certain children and families. There was a follow-through system, with specific staff delegated to monitor and mentor as needed.

Record of Actions, Discussions or Decisions, Interventions and Outcomes
Seeking greater clarity by fine tuning actions through a **(RADIO, in case you missed it!).**

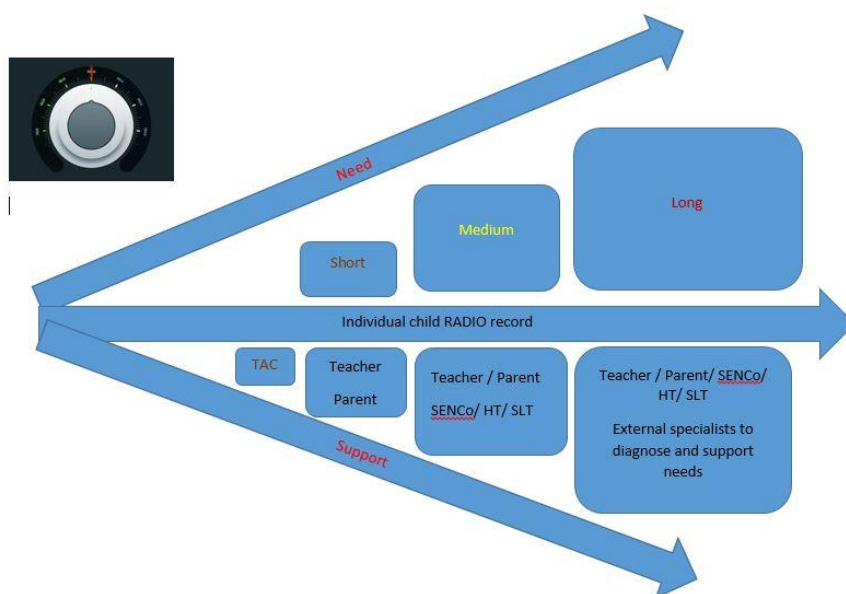**Building an individual case study.**

Essentially, SEND practice describes a sequence of events, which seek to refine the actions and focus

of attention, to identify, quantify and qualify the exact nature of a problem. Once this has been established, remedial action can take place. The longer the gap, the greater the problem can become, as further complications can become built into the experience, not least of which is learner self-esteem, affected by adult and peer responses to the circumstance.

Every teacher is a teacher of individual needs, which often identify themselves as little concerns when a learner either exceeds or does not grasp what is being expected.

The SEND framework 2014 does state that poor teaching approaches will handicap decisions on a child's special educational needs. SEND is not a substitute for poor teaching or poor teachers. High quality teaching and learning should identify, describe and track needs within a classroom. Work sampling, annotations and record keeping will all contribute to good decisions. Some may say that this is additional work. However, it could be argued that well planned, well focused activities, with good oral and written feedback, to identified needs, in itself constitutes a reasonably clear start point of a record. An annotated personal record, for discrete individuals, as describe below should also be kept.

Teachers receive their classes from someone else, even at the earliest stages, where a parent or nursery member of staff has already become aware of little foibles, or gaps in understanding, or an area where there appears to be extra talent.

The parent is the child's first teacher; it is to be hoped that their relationship is such that they get to know their children really well, through interactions at home and in places of interest that generate speaking and listening skills. As a Governor of a school in Gosport, as well as my own education career, I know that this is not the case, with children arriving operating at two year old levels, of speech and socialisation.

The adult role, teacher and support staff, is to be vigilant in spotting the child reactions in different situations, noting areas of concern, but also of achievement, so that a balanced picture can be built. The profiles built up during the Early Years stage is a more refined document than may have formerly been available.

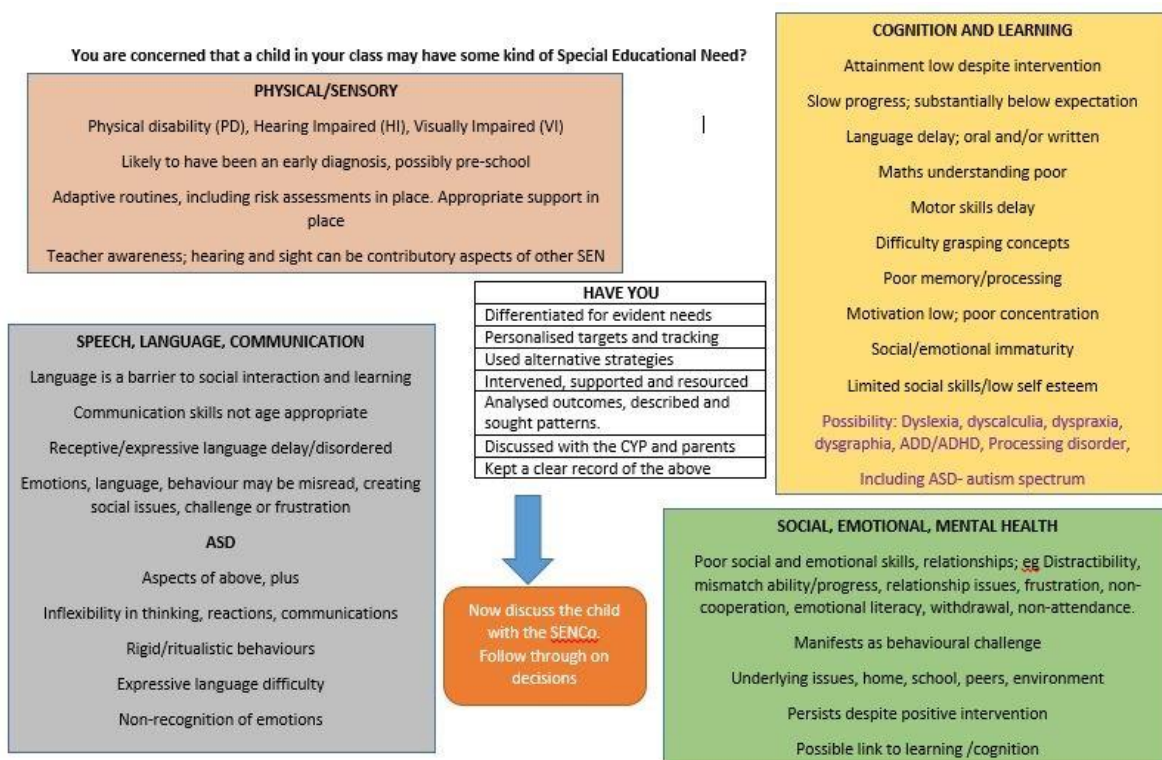If concerns emerge, there are likely to be three phases;

1. **Short (wave) term, classroom based.** The teacher and other adults become aware that an area of need exists. They develop a short term plan to address the issue and agree a monitoring approach that allows them to spot and track the outcomes. Where feasible, discussions with the learner might deepen the adult understanding of the learning issues. Outcomes are checked carefully to deduce any patterns arising, which are then shared with parents and decisions reached about next steps. Should the child display greater needs, moving to the second phase is likely to involve classroom staff in greater investigative activity and recording.

2. **Medium (wave) term, involving internal specialist colleagues.** Where an issue goes beyond the current capacity of the classteacher, the school internal specialist, the SENCo, should be involved to oversee the record, to discuss with the teacher and the parent possible ways forward and to agree a new plan of action in the classroom. This may involve using a discrete approach to the identified problem, with some specified time need. For example, a child with a specific reading issue might need some individualised time with an adult, whose role is to undertake a miscue analysis during each session to deduce with greater accuracy the nature of the problem. The SENCo may be involved in classroom observations, keeping records of on/off task behaviours, relationships, task application, with outcomes being photocopied and annotated to deepen the understanding of the problem, thereby refining the classroom action. Interventions strategies must be SMART targets. Too often in SEND situations, classteachers operate at too global a level, so that the refined needs of the individuals are missed, until they become more critical. There is a need for regular work sampling and annotations to describe the learning journey and issues still arising. **The lack of such a record could handicap a child and the teacher, as it will be requested before specific help can be offered, especially if the school SLT has to allocate additional funding/adult support to address the issue.**

3. **Long (wave) term, the school will involve a range of specialist experts, to support the diagnosis of the issue.** Diagnosis depends on the quality of record keeping in the classroom and the school, if patterns are to be described and the area for investigation is to be narrowed. As a result, a programme of action is likely to be agreed, timescales set and evidence needed identified. This is likely to be similar to the needs above, but within a refined remit.

Over time, a case study emerges, with a record of actions, discussion, decisions, interventions and outcomes. It may be, at this stage, that the collective wisdom is that there is a problem that is

greater that the system capacity to identify and remediate the need. In the new SEND framework, schools will apply for consideration of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The evidence file is sent to a panel for consideration, along with other applications. Each case is judged on its merits and there is no guarantee that awarding an EHCP will be the outcome. Equally, an EHCP may not guarantee extra funding or alternative education placement. The EHCP, if awarded, is quite likely to be a tighter descriptor of the learner's individual needs, the education response to be allocated by the establishment, the timescale and regularity of reviews.

In order to support classteacher thinking, especially about the details of some aspects of SEND, I pulled together a crib-sheet, which has proved popular, as a start point for planning, thinking and record keeping.

You are concerned that a child in your class may have some kind of Special Educational Need?

PHYSICAL/SENSORY

Physical disability (PD), Hearing Impaired (HI), Visually Impaired (VI)

Likely to have been an early diagnosis, possibly pre-school

Adaptive routines, including risk assessments in place. Appropriate support in place

Teacher awareness; hearing and sight can be contributory aspects of other SEN

COGNITION AND LEARNING

Attainment low despite intervention

Slow progress; substantially below expectation

Language delay; oral and/or written

Maths understanding poor

Motor skills delay

Difficulty grasping concepts

Poor memory/processing

Motivation low; poor concentration

Social/emotional immaturity

Limited social skills/low self esteem

Possibility: Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, ADD/ADHD, Processing disorder,

Including ASD- autism spectrum

HAVE YOU

Differentiated for evident needs
Personalised targets and tracking
Used alternative strategies
Intervened, supported and resourced
Analysed outcomes, described and sought patterns.
Discussed with the CYP and parents
Kept a clear record of the above

SPEECH, LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION

Language is a barrier to social interaction and learning

Communication skills not age appropriate

Receptive/expressive language delay/disordered

Emotions, language, behaviour may be misread, creating social issues, challenge or frustration

ASD

Aspects of above, plus

Inflexibility in thinking, reactions, communications

Rigid/ritualistic behaviours

Expressive language difficulty

Non-recognition of emotions

Now discuss the child with the SENCo. Follow through on decisions

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL HEALTH

Poor social and emotional skills, relationships; eg Distractibility, mismatch ability/progress, relationship issues, frustration, non-cooperation, emotional literacy, withdrawal, non-attendance.

Manifests as behavioural challenge

Underlying issues, home, school, peers, environment

Persists despite positive intervention

Possible link to learning /cognition

Developed by@ChrisChivers2   NB; Any areas of concern need to have firm evidence, as described in the central box.

The journey to SEN decisions is likely to be a phased affair, especially with regard to learning issues and possibly over an extended timescale for many children, much to the frustration of parents and teachers. "Getting a handle" on the problem can be a case of investigation leading to diagnosis, prescription and checking out the potential for "recovery".

Unlike taking tablets, remediation is also embedded in relationships and these need to be carefully considered. Children know where they are in comparison with their peers. They can judge for themselves those who can and can also highlight that they can't, across a wide range of subjects. This can lead to diminished self-esteem, to go along with the understanding of a learning struggle. They know when they are being given easier things to do, so presenting challenge with a clear rationale is important.
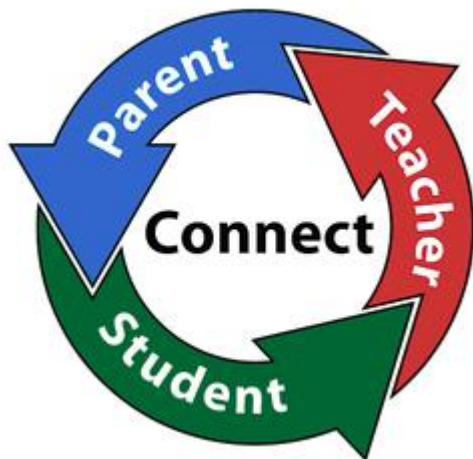
Allocating a teaching assistant can create a mutually dependent relationship, with a child's independence being limited by constant adult support. Equally, the TA role can be dependent on the child's continuing needs. It need careful oversight and review.

The child needs can challenge the teacher expertise, especially in the earlier stages of their career, where they may not have had wide experience across several year groups, so can understand where the child is on the development spectrum. Where this is the case, reference to teachers of earlier years can provide pedagogical and practical advice. In many ways, teaching standard 2, progress and outcomes, is THE key standard to support teacher understanding. What is the "normal" learning journey of children from early years through to year 6? Ok, I know this will never be linear, but there are developmental patterns which describe the possible jumps through aspects of the curriculum. Unpicking what progress "might be like", gives a background to raising concerns.

Keeping a track of all the different needs of children is currently significant, within the changed National Curriculum, where cohort expectations have been articulated, with "labels" that will be allocated at the end of Key Stages that suggest that a child may not be at the expected standard, which will include all children with special educational needs. There is a need to ensure cohort coverage while at the same time looking at the areas where individuals might not be quite at the level required.

I would propose the use of exercise books as personal organisers as a means of keeping track of the two aspects, where lesson by lesson progress through the curriculum is evidenced, but flip-out sheets record the specifics of individual needs. The whole becomes a personal portfolio, from which clarity in formative and summative assessment, as well as reporting can be evidenced, available for all viewers.

Working with parents effectively.

Create humane systems to deal with people, where schools and parents meet and collaborate. For the whole of my career as a headteacher, I used the poem below as a central feature of working with parents.

Unity

(author unknown)

I dreamed I stood in a studio and watched two sculptors there,

The clay they used was a young child's mind and they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher: the tools she used were books and music and art;

One was a parent with a guiding hand and gentle loving heart.

And when at last their work was done, they were proud of what they had wrought.

For the things they had worked into the child could never be sold or bought!

And each agreed she would have failed if she had worked alone.

For behind the parent stood the school and behind the teacher the home!

It's probably a truism to state that a parent's experience of school is likely to colour their view of education. I heard this forty years ago as a probationary teacher, when a 16 year old told me that he wasn't bothered as he'd be working with his brother as a builder's mate. His parents did not turn up for parent's evenings, quoting the same lines.

After a transfer to Primary, I was faced with a concerned parent whose child was a little difficult at home. He wanted advice from an expert. As a young, recently married and childless teacher, I felt ill equipped for such questions, but, in the best tradition of the all-knowing, I offered advice. Fortunately it worked, but, on becoming a parent, I am sure that my approach to giving advice changed from inside knowledge, or at least empathy.

For the past eleven years, I have done a variety of freelance consultancy activities, including assessments for Leading Parent Partnership Award and Inclusion Quality Mark. The first scheme is firmly focused on parents and their links with schools, while the IQM scheme has parents and the Community as major elements.

Conversations with schools and with parents suggest that there is possibly still a residual problem in this regard, with parents still being described as "hard to reach" by schools and some parents describing school as hard to engage, with the effect of neither communicating effectively.

There is a need to reduce this issue; making school accessible is one area which can be reviewed. Where schools demonstrated the following, parents expressed their ease of accessing the school if there was an issue

Essentially parents want to be continuing partners in their child's education. Some will be better at that than others. No-one trains parents; they have to rely on instinct and their own upbringing. Parents need to know where they are with regard to the school and the staff. In any human system, it is easy to get things wrong, from either side, especially if the relationship is based on assumptions. So the first action on a school is to check the assumptions.

What can schools do to consider the needs of parents?

Make the school welcoming. A simple starting point perhaps, but, has your school ever audited the parent view of the welcome at the reception? Are they met with a smile and a recognition that they are there? Schools tend to assume that they are welcoming.

Ask the parents; set up a postcard system with two simple questions;

- Does our reception make you feel welcome?

- How can we improve it?

Once waiting, where do parents have to sit and wait? Is it a pleasant space; something to look at or read to pass the time. Make it easy to be a part of the school from the beginning.

Go out to them. One school with which I worked had a large Somali population which was not, as a general rule, participating in school life. The school made contact with one of the community leaders and went to meet the group at one of their meetings. The leaders were invited into the school; one became a Governor and gave a positive message to the community. They came in numbers after that.

A Special School, with a diverse and widely spaced intake found parent's evening relatively unattended. Questioning the parents, it became clear that the issue was transport in the evenings as well as looking out for their disabled children. The school organised satellite meetings at several

places such as community halls and libraries. As a result, meetings were facilitated and parent-school relations enhanced.

Induction is a well-articulated system. There is a need to ensure that sufficient thought is given to this. First impressions count. This can be a case of well written paperwork, translated if needed into a heritage language or meetings that are timed to suit parents as well as teachers. If parents are asked what they want to know, then written materials can be created to ensure that this information is shared, as well as the essential school information.

Information sharing is straight forward. All school publications should be aware of the needs of the parent audience. Newsletters and aspects of websites can be written in ways which might exclude a number of parents, especially if they are jargon-filled. Policies, which have to be available to parents can be in inaccessible language.

A parent needing to contact the school should find this easy in any form needed; text, phone call, letter, face to face. Early acknowledgement and an understanding that the concern is receiving attention can defuse a situation.

Are parents aware of what their children are studying this half term? Where classroom newsletters are shared with parents, they can anticipate off site visits, needs for specific equipment, or just to be aware of the areas where homework will arrive home.

Do reports give parents information to help them to support learning at home? Is homework accessible and evidently seen as useful activity to support learning?

Parents and children explore learning together. Where schools create opportunities for parent and their children to do activities together, there is an articulation of strengthened bonds and understanding of each other, which has a positive impact on learning in class. Examples from practice include:- Lads' and Dads' days, community art activities, allotmenting, choirs and drama, Family learning activities, especially maths, English and art or craft. It is the learning together that is valued as it gives new insights to both parent and child. An example of schools as parenting coaches?

Parent Voice. There are many ways in which schools seek to engage with parents. Who organises it and for what purpose can determine the success or otherwise of the venture. Even the name of the group can cause an issue, if some parents feel excluded. The notion of Parent Voice has been successfully used in a range of schools, particularly if the premise is that the school wants to hear what parents think. Openness allows a broad range of parents to be involved, developing a more supportive culture.

Single question questionnaire. Many schools still send a newsletter, most have an active, accessible website. Instead of sending out an A4 sheet of 20 questions once a year, why not ask one (or at most three related questions) on each newsletter per week or fortnight? Or maybe a post it exit poll after parent's evening, based on WWW and EBI. Parents could be alerted to the question through a text service. You would not be overloading your audience, might get a better response and your data analysis could be more focused, with the potential to respond within the next newsletter, demonstrating quickly that views have been considered. Where schools have adopted a "You said, we thought, we did…" approach, the quality of communication and interaction between home and school improved immensely.

Schools need parent support, for a wide range of needs that are ancillary to learning. Both want the same outcomes- success for the child.

Thinking beyond the classroom; food for thought.

Extend your skill set

Teachers come out of their initial training, initially trained!

We all have a personal frame of reference within which we operate.

There is a need for a school exemplar portfolio approach to support learner and teacher judgements and to exemplify the journey that needs to be taken.

Portfolios that cover the school age range support early career teachers, as a form of calibration.

If you know what you are looking for, you might just see it, or know that it isn't there.

The danger of not having a frame of reference against which children can be judged across all schools is that there will be a whole array of assessment approaches, unique to the school.

At transition and transfer, receiving schools will need to understand the many different approaches being used, in order to understand the children transferring in.

Alternatively, in some transitions, we will see earlier outcomes being ignored, with Secondary schools retesting to establish baselines from which progress in the school will be measured.

Putting the expectations in front of learners keeps them, other adults and the teacher in touch with their current targets.

So, show them the point, show them the journey, give them an idea of what it might look like as a finished product, then offer the chance to undertake the journey, engage, question and guide with care, then evaluate and celebrate the outcomes, deciding what could have been improved (eg WWW-what worked well) and what still needs to be achieved (eg EBI-even better if).
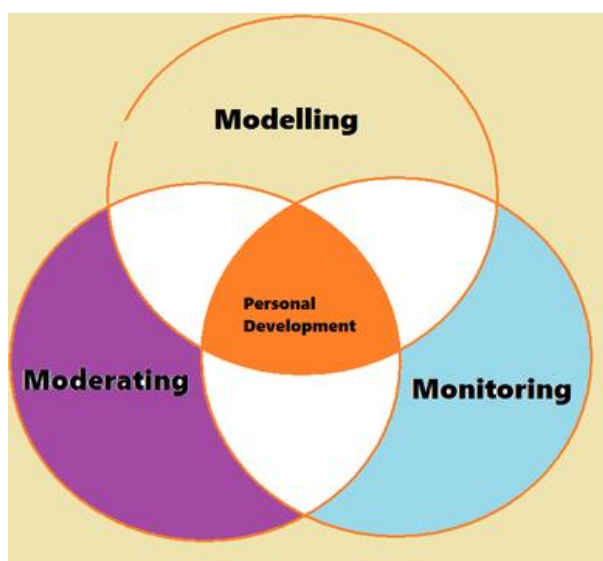
SEND; Inclusion is just doing your job.

TIC – Team including the child; TAC- Team around the child; TOE- Team of experts- a graduated approach to Special Needs?

Essentially, the best systems create a series of safety nets through which, it is to be hoped, no child can slip.

The key to working well with parents; communication.

Schools need parent support, for a wide range of needs that are ancillary to learning. Both want the same outcomes- success for the child.

Moderation; someone to talk to

Mentoring; modelling, moderation and monitoring

In looking at teacher development, the elements of the title would seem to be significant. They are, to some extent exemplified in the national standards for in-school mentors that were published in the autumn of 2016. These can read as "grandma sucks eggs", but cover personal qualities, teaching model, professional exemplar and to show that they are self-developing in their role. They sometimes need to be guide, counsellor, advocate, overseer and judge, sometimes all rolled into one.

While a few individuals have sufficient confidence and self-assurance, the majority of teachers in my experience have valued opportunities to work alongside others whose expertise they value, either in formal sessions sharing understandings or informally, through classroom visits for observation or time to chat.

ITE trainees should have, or create, dedicated time to visit other classes, as well as to watch their mentors, to gain an idea of the approaches being modelled within their practice school.

Whether formal or informal, the sharing of, or modelling of expertise is a form of mentoring.

If the "expert" visits the class of the "mentee", they can monitor or audit the classroom provision and offer coaching advice about improvements. So mentoring, moderation and monitoring are three points on a circle, or the intersection on a Venn diagram, with the centre being the point of personal improvement, where all three come together.

The model of mentor sharing is worth exploring. It takes time to develop descriptors of working practices in such a way as to impact on the practice of another. The receiver has to develop a mental model of the classroom situation being described, including the classroom layout, the storage, availability and accessibility of relevant resources and the challenge tasks that were shared.

This would be in addition to the detail of how essential information was shared, through direct instruction, dialogue, dvd, imagery or artefacts to explore or text material to read, ahead of interactive approaches.

The mentor, in visiting the mentee for an observation may well focus on these initial aspects, as they are the structural elements of the lesson, in the hands of the teacher through their planning. If elements of the structure needed to be tweaked for other lessons, this advice is relatively easily given.

Timely intervention support by a mentor can prompt mentees to take action at an appropriate time. The reason for this and exploration of the consequences of taking the action can be explored, as well as the opposite scenario. I don't mean the mentor calling out to the mentee to do something, as this is undermining, but rather a quiet word in the ear, so that the mentee can retain status.

The mentor is likely to be able to "tick off" the professional standards as the lesson progresses, based on the teacher status and relationships with the class and any additional adults, covering standards 8, 7 and 1. The order and organisation of the planning is embedded in standard 4, while the mentee subject knowledge (3) is likely to be evident in the introductory elements, where they share essential information to children in a form that is appropriate, and pitched to the age and needs of the group.

The lesson pitch, including the quality of task challenges evidences standard 2.

While the lesson progresses, the mentor will be listening to interactions, questioning, scaffolding, modelling to explore the detail of supportive feedback or adaptations to the original tasking to take account of the emerging evidence of misconception or lack of understanding. This could be at an individual, group or class level, with lesson interruptions to highlight or share developing concerns within the learning. It is often the close details of the lesson that determines the quality of the outcome from the learners.

Understanding what "good" looks like as an outcome is an essential tool to support teacher judgement. In the early stages of a career, this might be a little less secure, but, through exposure to a wide range of outcomes, this develops greater security, especially if supported by moderation activities with another acting as mentor.

Monitoring exists on a number of levels. The interaction with the mentee's lesson allow for both developmental and judgemental commentary. Working with ITE trainees, while for the majority of their school experiences these will be developmental, en route, for individuals, evidence has to be faced of significant deficits in their practice or their professional approach. On some occasions the trainee may well require a career discussion to decide their future routes. ITE providers have a responsibility to the profession as a whole, to quality assure all trainees. There will be a range of competences within any cohort, but there has to be a basic level of competence to be determined as employable.

Competence can become an issue for serving teachers, although this is rare. Processes are clearly articulated in personnel documentation and it is incumbent on the school to quality assure the

process leading to (hopefully) addressing and remediating the identified issues. A note of concern on an ITE route serves as a beginning point for developmental dialogue.

Mentoring, moderation and monitoring are the three parts of supported personal development. They are, for the most-part a shared experience, done with and through, rather than to. If handled with care, the mentee benefits. If it is too onerous a process, or perceived as top-down judgement, it may not support general improvement, only focus in a small target area.

Like many things in life, mentoring is often a judgement call. This has to be acknowledged as occasionally flawed; it is a human system. For that reason, ITE providers have quality assurance mechanisms, through visiting Link Tutors or specific tutors responsible for Quality Assurance and for mentor development. I am lucky enough to be undertaking all three roles for different providers, so can see the picture from a variety of roles.

Like any learning situation, it is a case of identify, address, check. If done in a professional manner, everyone benefits, including the mentor, whose person-management skills are enhanced through undertaking the role. They also reflect very deeply on their own practice through watching others. The whole system benefits.

Developing another develops yourself. Everyone should have and become a mentor to another. Giving quality feedback and advice, as well as engaging in professional dialogue, is a powerful development tool, for both giver and receiver.

Mentoring is excellent CPD

One of the elements in the potential for success of ITT trainees and NQTs is the school context into which they are placed, with a significant factor being the quality of mentoring that they receive from in-school staff.

It has to be hoped that the teacher whose class is being used for a school practice is happy that they will be having a student. I have met mentors who have complained at the outset that the student was a last minute change to plans. It is equally important that the trainee is introduced to the class in positive terms, so that their status is not undermined from the beginning.

For preference, the mentor will have received some training beforehand, so that they are prepared as fully as possible to understand the pattern of the school experience, the necessary paperwork, the need for the student to complete task for the university during the practice, the teaching demands that it is reasonable to make at different stages.

The school experience has to start with a modest apprenticeship, usually during a short familiarisation period (1 week) approach as the trainee familiarises themselves with the school layout, the policies and practices, timings and the individuals who make up the class, including any TAs who make up the team. They need to be introduced to key staff, subject leaders, SENCo, caretakers. They need time to gather their thoughts about the intended plans and their part in this. To create an overview diary, for the whole practice, that details the growing demand, while still keeping track of extraneous demands, is a good means of keeping everyone on track.

The overriding need is for the student to have the time and space to develop as a rounded teacher, able to show that they can evidence their progress against the eight teacher standards. The personal

side of this is likely to be evident early (8,1,7 and 4).

8) They will show professionalism in all aspects of their approach, to relationships and to their focus on the tasks in hand. They will be self-developers, not completely reliant on others in order to function.
1) They will have some idea about the character of a well-run class, have appropriately high outline expectations about children as learners, which will be "coloured in" during the school experience.
7) They will understand the importance of good behaviour, understand the school system and work effectively within that; in doing so, showing that they can operate independently.
4) They are ordered and organised in all things, but especially in their planning and record keeping.

The remaining standards rely on their understanding of the needs of the class in front of them, especially with regard to their learning outcomes to date and the expectations of their progress over the time of the practice. This can be summarised as knowing the children well, planning for challenge and progress, running an effective lesson, engaging with ongoing learning and then reviewing outcomes to support decision making.

Some mentors find it hard to relinquish their grip on the class, but, unless they do so, the state of deference might put the student at risk of failure, as always working within another's thinking can create tensions which move from professional to personal.

It is important that the mentor forms a strong coaching relationship with the trainee, that recognises that (s)he has strengths developed over a number of years and that there will still be some developmental needs, not least knowledge of the children. They need to be sensitive to their context; each school and each class can be subtly different, often as a result of that teacher. They need to recognise that the student may turn out to be a stronger teacher that they are and acknowledge significant success without rancour. A jealous teacher can damage a potentially excellent colleague.

Sensitive professional support and challenge is the hallmark of high quality mentoring. The trainee will not necessarily be expecting everything to be high quality from the beginning, so they need regular feedback that supports their development, but which doesn't rely on just hints and tips. There has to be a clear rationale behind all support. The mentor does need to know the Teaching Standards, so that they can work within these parameters, as a whole.

Observations, both informal and formal, are points where the mentor has seek to suppress personal bias and seek to see the lesson for what it is. It is possible later, during the debrief, to clarify, through questions, the trainee intentions, outcomes and their evaluation of progress made in the lesson. Alternative strategies can be offered, for consideration. As a Link Tutor, I would advise a mentor to offer in-lesson prompts as development, if it is obvious that a tweak is needed, where not to do so will jeopardise a positive outcome. In-ear coaching might be available in some situations.

Discussions should always be of a professional nature, as the mentor is the professional model that the trainee will work to in that setting. Encouraging the student to self-evaluate is key to them becoming fully self-reliant. They need clarity if they are to come up with their own solutions when operating independently. A developing relationship will alter the mentor-trainee relationship over the time of the practice.

Joining in with in-school training, staff discussions, meeting with in-school experts all contribute to the trainee understanding of the breadth of demand on a soon to be teacher. They need to recognise that it is a team game with colleagues relying on each other to do what is expected of them. At the same time, they may need advice on how to maintain a balance, avoiding burning the candle at both ends.

Where problems occur.

Planning. There is a need for the trainee to have an overview of the learning that will take place over the time of the practice. The medium term plan enables single lessons to be seen in context. It is possible, early in the experience, to structure a week so that the trainee is a part of the whole, rather than just being involved in a planning single lessons.

- Work together on the week's plan, eg for English, but could be any subject.

- Teacher leads lesson 1, student observes and participates with a group, discussion after.

- Student prepares lesson 2, teacher informally observes, participates with a group, then feeds back to student in an exchange of views.

- Student prepares lesson 3, as in 2.

- Teacher leads lesson 4, as in 1.

- Student leads lesson 5, as in 2 but this time observed formally.

- Both teacher and student review the week, including book scrutiny to ascertain progress and to make plans for the forthcoming week. Student keeps evidence of outcomes and progress discussion for portfolio.

Teaching Standards 6&5 are often the least well documented standards, even half way into the practice, as students often believe that assessment is something that is done in discrete weeks, rather than lesson by lesson and within lessons. This needs to be addressed early, with trainees reflecting on the points in a lesson where they went "off plan" in response to evident needs. They need to get good at doing this, as it is in-lesson support, coaching and feedback to learners that makes a difference.

Where a school takes a student but they are seen as just one teacher's student, this can become self-limiting. The trainee should be enabled to make use of the full range of expertise available within the school.

Trainees need to learn how to talk with parents, so taking opportunities to sit in on teacher-parent discussions is important.

Mentors need to loosen their grip as the practice progresses, so that the student can be seen to operate independently. In a few weeks, they may well become a colleague in the school. It is not uncommon for a student on experience to be employed by the school.

Mentors and their schools are helping to train the teachers of the future. Their role is an essential one, as the system needs a supply of high quality trainees developing into high quality teachers. Effectively they are "tutors in residence" as far as trainees are concerned.

Some universities offer mentoring modules that offer certification, including up to Master's level.

Moderation; someone to talk to. Food for thought.

Mentoring a trainee or NQT requires a range of skills; sometimes the mentor needs to be guide, counsellor, advocate, overseer and judge, sometimes all rolled into one.

Sensitive professional support and challenge is the hallmark of high quality mentoring.

Where a school takes a student but they are seen as just one teacher's student, this can become self-limiting.

Whether formal or informal, the sharing of, or modelling of expertise is a form of mentoring, but the trainee has to be supported to "see" what is on display.

Descriptive skills should link with analytical skill, through reflection.

If the "expert" visits the class of the "mentee", they can monitor or audit the classroom provision and offer coaching advice about improvements.

Timely intervention support by a mentor can prompt mentees to take action at an appropriate time as a quiet word in the ear, so that the mentee can retain status.

While the lesson progresses, the mentor will be listening to interactions, questioning, scaffolding, modelling to explore the detail of supportive feedback or adaptations to the original tasking to take account of the emerging evidence of misconception or lack of understanding.

Mentoring is often a judgement call. This has to be acknowledged as occasionally flawed; it is a human system.

Mentors reflect very deeply on their own practice through watching others.

Mentors are "tutors in residence" as far as trainees are concerned.

In summary; building a thinking teacher

In 2012, the Teacher Standards changed, from 33 statements to 8 headings. It still surprises me that, after nearly four and a half years, many teachers still cannot identify all eight standards, even though they are supposedly working within them each day.

However, in my developmental roles, they can be very interesting, as it is possible to play with permutations of the standards that exemplify what it means to become a complete teacher, especially during university or School Direct (short) experiences. There is much to be learned and this often has to be learned and adapted in the context of the school experience, which can cause tensions, with performance needs as well as personal developmental needs.
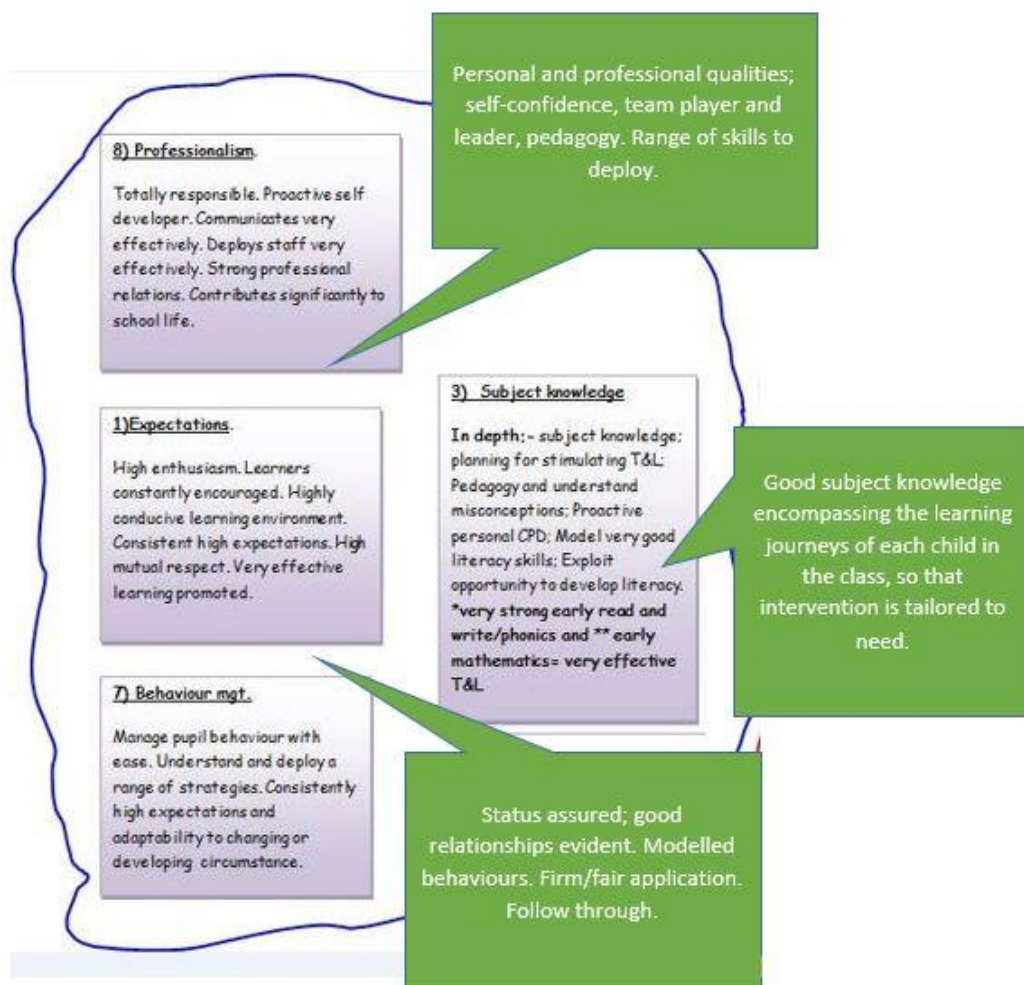
For information, in case you can't remember them all, the eight standards are: -

1) Expectations
2) Progress and Outcomes
3) Subject Knowledge
4) Planning
5) Adaptation
6) Assessment
7) Behaviour management
8) Professionalism

Plus there's a part 2, which describes further the professional standing of a teacher within the broader community.

Behind these headings are many lines of exemplary materials.

However, the headings are quite useful, in themselves, as supports for a narrative that seeks to describe teachers in development.

Presenter

34 – Not necessarily the ultimate age for a teacher, but this could describe, say, a wildlife expert, or similar, who knows their stuff and can put it across in a clear narrative to an audience, using age appropriate vocabulary and language structures. The chances are that children in the audience are

with parents taking control of behaviours. To some extent, it also describes some television presenter approaches, as they can take for granted that their core audience is watching. If they are also looking at a mobile phone, making a cup of tea, or are in any other way distracted, it's not their problem.

873 – A person of professional standing, who has the skills to control an allocated group, for a period of time, who can be trusted to get across some subject knowledge in an ordered manner. This could be used to describe a teaching assistant, or other adult whom a head deems appropriate to lead an activity.
They can **work within any prescribed approach to behaviour**, dealing with issues that arise appropriately.
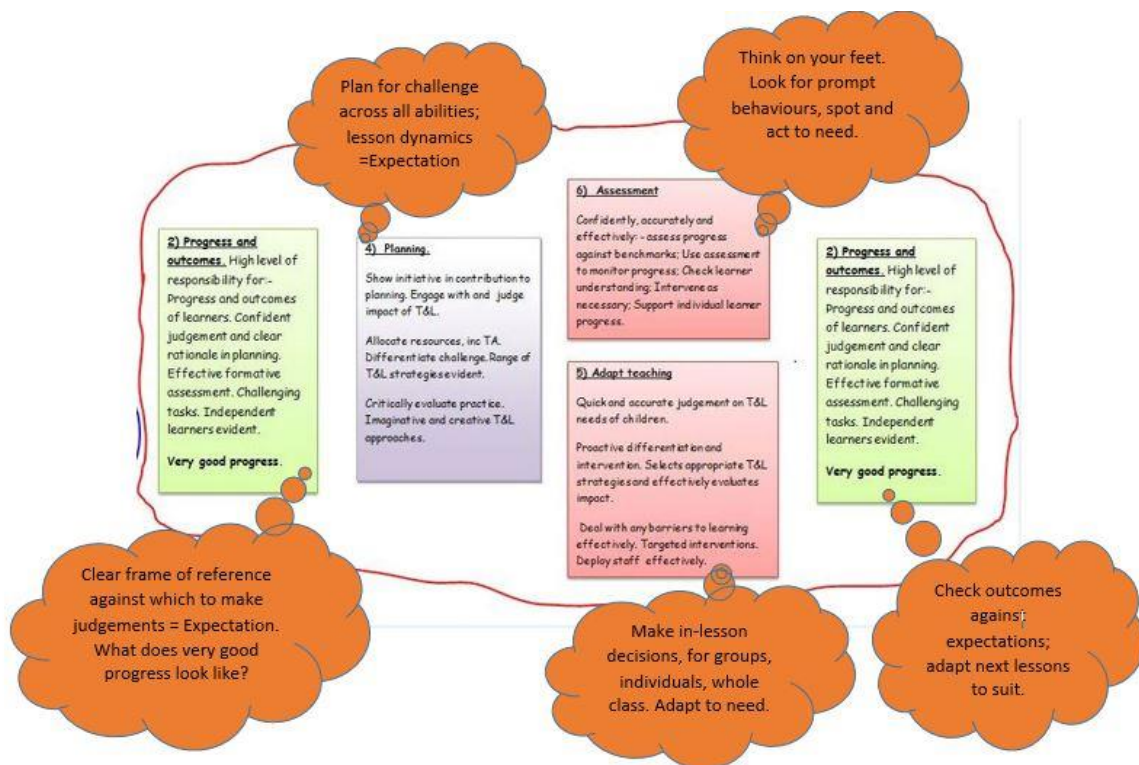
Structuralist approach; a trainee still making sense of the organisational needs.

8731 – Having appropriate expectations of behaviour **and learning** (TS1) raises the expectations of the adult, as the conduit through which some level of progress in a subject area might be accomplished.

It is often the case that **these standards are the first and easiest to be evidenced for a trainee teacher**, as, by and large, they describe the personal, professional persona of the adult, who knows their subject and can organise a classroom to get information across in a coherent form over time.

It is also likely to describe a teacher confident in their professionalism and ability to get what they know across to a range of school audiences, within an overall planning approach. See the diagram above.

The limiting factor from this point is embedded in standard 2, progress and outcomes; in other words, how well are the children known and how well does the adult understand the learning outcomes appropriate to different year groups?

Plan for challenge across all abilities; lesson dynamics =Expectation

Think on your feet. Look for prompt behaviours, spot and act to need.

6) Assessment
Confidently, accurately and effectively: - assess progress against benchmarks; Use assessment to monitor progress; Check learner understanding; Intervene as necessary; Support individual learner progress.

2) Progress and outcomes. High level of responsibility for:- Progress and outcomes of learners. Confident judgement and clear rationale in planning. Effective formative assessment. Challenging tasks. Independent learners evident.

Very good progress.

4) Planning.
Show initiative in contribution to planning. Engage with and judge impact of T&L.

Allocate resources, inc TA. Differentiate challenge. Range of T&L strategies evident.

Critically evaluate practice. Imaginative and creative T&L approaches.

5) Adapt teaching
Quick and accurate judgement on T&L needs of children.

Proactive differentiation and intervention. Selects appropriate T&L strategies and effectively evaluates impact.

Deal with any barriers to learning effectively. Targeted interventions. Deploy staff effectively.

2) Progress and outcomes. High level of responsibility for:- Progress and outcomes of learners. Confident judgement and clear rationale in planning. Effective formative assessment. Challenging tasks. Independent learners evident.

Very good progress.

Clear frame of reference against which to make judgements = Expectation. What does very good progress look like?

Make in-lesson decisions, for groups, individuals, whole class. Adapt to need.

Check outcomes against expectations; adapt next lessons to suit.

Holistic approach

432-65-2 - You'd want the person described above to have **a wider range of skills, to include 432**, being able to organise their subject over different timescales, so that the subject requirements were built up appropriately and checked on the way, with the intention that children should embark on a journey towards an expected point, with the teacher aware of the whole journey and the significant checkpoints on the way, as well as the final destination.

It can depend on how you define children making progress (TS2) and how you determine whether they have. If the definition is coverage leading to a test for memory, it might, in inexperienced hands, preclude analysis of the needs of specific individuals (TS6), leading to further engagement with them, undertaking adapted approaches (TS5).

Interaction with learners, engaging with the ongoing learning and making subtle or more significant alterations to the expectations of some, responding to evidence within the classroom, **TS6&5, are probably the key to ultimate teacher success**, in that it is the sum total of progress of each child (TS2) in a class or cohort, that ultimately is the signal that the school is doing well be every child, whatever their needs.

Teacher standard 2 also covers the full range of needs likely to be encountered. If, for example, a teacher has experience limited to one year group, as can happen in some organisations, knowledge of achievement in years above or below enhance and extend the outcome knowledge base, enabling the teacher to make more nuanced decisions about challenge and intervention needs. Mentoring and moderation are key elements in this area, to allow the less experienced teacher to benefit from the wisdom of more experienced colleagues.

Teacher standard 2 is also the area that is currently causing concern, in looking at assessment and

tracking needs for teachers. It's the one area where experience provides the basis for personal development, in making accurate judgements about children as learners, leading to better planning, interaction and adaptation; TS 465. The bottom line question; "How well, breadth and depth, can you show that you know your children?"

It takes time, and is a stage in a progressive development, based on analytical reflection, from reading and first-hand experiences on behalf of the developing teacher. Self-development is a constituent of teacher standard 8; developing yourself into the best possible professional, as a team player and a team leader, is key to long term success in teaching.

Teaching, in many ways, is an investigative role, based on an original hypothesis that the planning is pitched at the right level, with in-lesson evidence showing the need to alter course, or to provide additional scaffolds to support individuals.

Thinking takes time and that can be a rare commodity in a busy school room. So it is incumbent on each teacher, especially trainees, to make best use of available time to think and talk about the role. It is a job where it can be difficult to switch off, too.

Many will use holidays as time to catch up on thinking. As a head, I often thought of the job as 24/7/365. Perhaps that contributes to both success and burn-out?

…and remaining human.

Teaching is a slightly strange job, in that, in order to become a good practitioner, there is a need to immerse oneself in the role, entailing much time thinking, talking and sharing ideas within the colleague team.

The internet has added significantly to each of these activities, if the committed teacher then joins an on-line community, or spends time trawling the available information and resources. It can be a

case of "How much is enough?" To which the answer is that teaching has the potential to become a 24/7/365 job, especially as one moves into promoted roles.

Exploring the dynamics of a teacher role throughout a career is interesting. I can only look at those lives that have been close to me and my own career, from probationer in 1974, through to 16 years of headship and now 11 years of freelance activity.

The early years of teaching were characterised by long hours, as training opportunities were invariably twilight, with some at weekends. Photocopying and ICT were still being invented, so worksheets and cards had to be hand written. Clubs were a regular demand. However, for several years, there was still time to play cricket during summer weekends and midweek, as these could be diaried and kept to. Other sports were a little more haphazard, as they relied on diaries tying up, eg squash.

An interest in wildlife was supported by Wildlife Trust talks, again on the calendar. Personal time could be created and holidays booked to provide a bit of distance from home and school demands. But, I can still remember visits to places of interest which resulted in some purchases, photographs, booklet retention, picking up shells, stones or other objects that might go onto the interest table.

Family life changed the time dimension somewhat, in that cricket became one weekend game and an occasional midweek fixture, ending when I managed not to catch a ball with my face, which required a modicum of reconstruction. Our, then, three year old's reaction on seeing me was enough to bring participation to an end.

Folk music replaced cricket, being a little less hazardous. I've avoided all contact with Morris dancing sticks! After learning to play the guitar, as a 29 year old, starting with the school beginners' group, I was asked to run workshops at the Sidmouth Folk Festival, during which I encountered the bodhran. An immediate affinity with the two-ended beater allowed me to relatively quickly develop sufficient skill to join a friend in sharing tunes and songs at folk clubs, then to join a demonstration dance group as one of the musicians, which led to an offshoot barn dance band. While this continued, it allowed regular extended sessions that required full concentration; no chance of drifting back to "school think".

Conservation activities led to voluntarily running the Hampshire and IoW Wildlife Trust Junior Watch group, leading monthly meetings, coordination a dozen groups and collating the regular newsletter. Within all this, I also made time for a Post Grad Cert Ed and then a PG Dip Ed! Time and energy seemed to expand to fill the need.

Promotion to deputy headship saw the loss of time for Watch, as coordination aspects of school took that time. Promotion to headship, developing a need school, took away the regular folk playing. Team building required coordination time, so personal time became less available.

Our third child was three when my first wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. This shaped the following eleven years, particularly as one major decision was to buy a cheap house in mid-France, to allow holidays at times other than the summer holiday, replacing the regular camping trips that we had done for fifteen years. It also offered an alternative place for activities that would clear my mind for periods of each day. Worrying about leaking pipes, security of electrics or of your carpentry concentrates the mind. These forays provided the quality time breaks, where term-time was heavily school-dominated.

Now that I am considering a new phase in my life, several of the "lost hobbies" are still in mind. I have, over the past few years, got out the paints and daubed on paper for relaxation. I'm looking for an outlet for folk music, and I'd love to find an over-60s cricket team. I just won't field at silly mid-on. Perhaps that's why it has that title! I will make diary time for that, and for the regular visits to France for gardening and maintenance.

Life changes. One has to accept that. We change, too. Developing and maintaining hobbies takes time and effort. Having the ability to diary time for this can be a luxury within family time, but pays dividends, as you have moments of relaxation away from work and family pressures. The ebb and flow of life can challenge our time. Some things fall, to be replaced by other demands. It is important not to feel deprived when this happens, it's all part of life's rich tapestry.

Equally, there are no quick fixes. Demands on our time can come from all directions, as young people with older parents, marrying and sharing time with another, children arriving, various transitions then older parent needs coupled with grandparenting. Time demands are individual. Work makes specific demands. It is timed, from the official start and finish times to the personal needs to arrive ahead of the start and to leave when satisfied that the job's been done. Sometimes, in order to preserve sanity, "good enough" has to be just that. Perfect may be just one step too far on that day.

School managers need to consider the waves of demand that they put on people, usually eating into personal time, such as report writing and parent meetings, as well as staff meetings and the multitude of other meetings that schools spawn. An annual calendar helps everyone to know where peak demands are and enable adaptation. Where report writing is required, reducing the meeting demands in other ways can be a way to pay back staff for their time. Timing reports at term ends can allow build up and good use of PPA or other support time, rather than after a holiday, where staff will spend their personal time working rather than unwinding.

Goodwill is often a case of very good communication, a well ordered and organised overview and supply-side approach from management, which reduces personal stress that comes from not knowing about an event, or finding that resources have run out. Being able to get on with the job efficiently allows more personal time to develop. Constant adaptation is tiring and demoralising. Being known as an individual is a key element. Managers who know their colleagues well, enabling them to deal with life issues effectively, recoup their goodwill many times over, as happy staff give far more that they receive. If someone seems to be taking advantage, this can become a professional issue.

Worker well-being is something that schools need to consider, have structures in place to provide personal support within available resources, run a well ordered school, where the team ethic can become self-sustaining; colleagues supporting each other.

On a personal level, find and try to keep personal time for distracting hobbies, whether it's a half hour walk, time in the garden, being quiet, o something more substantial. Accept that responsibilities will alter the balance, so that they can be accommodated. Look after yourself; eat well, drink moderately, sleep and rest appropriately. Enjoy your life and find balance and contentment. Sometimes this is challenging, but is something to work towards, providing your own "light at the end of the tunnel".

Learn to look after yourself. That way, you'll have time to think.