Education: Insights from Practice for Policy

Welcome to Education: Insights from practice for policy

Established in 1850 St Mary's University has a long-standing reputation for excellence in education. Our heritage is steeped in preparing teachers for professional practice and supporting social justice. We continue this work through our outstanding education programmes and through our research centres.

The centre for research into the education of marginalised children and young adults (CREMCYA) aims to nurture positive relationships with stakeholders so that, together, we can make a direct positive impact on children and young adults, on policies concerning them, and on the practitioners who work with them.

Education: Insights for policy from practice brings together educational experts from diverse fields with policy makers with the aim of highlighting key issues in education and what can be done to resolve them. We are delighted to share this space with colleagues whose insights we believe can support understanding of the realities of children and young adults, and the needs of those who work with them.

We thank you for joining us today in Westminster and offer particular thanks to our sponsor, Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick CBE. We hope you will keep in touch and tell us how the insights from practice shared today are helping to shape policy which supports education for all.

Professor Mike Seal, Dr Viki Veale, Dr Shalini Bhokar and Dr Fin Cullen

Centre for Research into the Education of Marginalised Children and Young Adults

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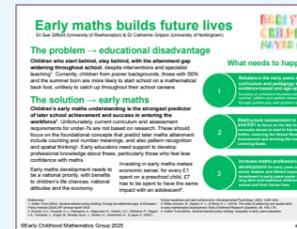
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Promoting Physical Development

Achieving High-Quality Provision in the Baby Room of English Nurseries

Dr Sara Bonetti

Kayla Halls

Outline

Following the expansion of early years government-funded provision to children as young as nine months old, this research opens up the conversation around high-quality out-of-home provision for children under two. The project draws together global literature on how quality is conceptualised, measured, and supported. It then explores the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the current preparation of, and support for, baby room educators in England through focus groups and surveys embedded in professional development conferences. Finally, a series of workshops with key sector stakeholders will develop an exciting and realistic vision of the future of quality in the baby room.

Keywords

Quality, babies, workforce

Kayla Halls is a Research Fellow at Middlesex University. She specialises in early childhood studies.

Dr Sara Bonetti is an independent researcher specialising in early childhood education practice and policy.

Kayla and Sara are working with their team to deliver a Nuffield Foundation grant. The aim of the Nuffield Foundation is to fund research that changes people's lives. In the light of increased government funding, our research highlights the need to develop a clear, sector-led vision for what quality provision means for children under the age of two and work towards that vision as a sector.

Middlesex University London

Nuffield Foundation

Achieving High-Quality Provision in the Baby Room of English Nurseries

Dr. Mona Sakr, Dr. Sara Bonetti, Kayla Halls

INTRODUCTION

Following the expansion of early years government-funded provision to children as young as nine months old, this research opens up the conversation around high-quality out-of-home provision for children under two. The project draws together global literature on how quality is conceptualised, measured, and supported. It then explores the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the current preparation of, and support for, baby room educators in England through focus groups and surveys embedded in professional development conferences. Finally, a series of workshops with key sector stakeholders will develop an exciting and realistic vision of the future of quality in the baby room.

OBJECTIVES

This poster shares the findings of the global literature review. Our aim is to open up the debate about quality in the baby room with a focus on:

- Whether a definition or vision of quality is offered and, if so, in which terms.

- How quality is assessed and measured.

- Which suggestions are provided to support quality in the baby room.

KEY FINDINGS

Geographical Spread of the Desktop Literature Review

We reviewed **193 articles**, the majority of which originated in the USA and Australia. The UK only contributed 12 articles to the literature on quality for babies.
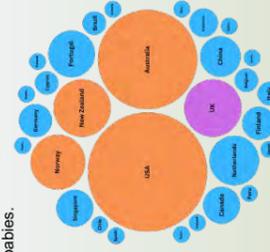
Defining quality

Quality is dynamic and needs to be driven by a shared purpose for the baby room.

Defining and regulating quality is dependent on a clear vision for what quality looks and feels like in the baby room. This is driven by a shared purpose for care and education in the baby room. How we define quality in the baby room depends on whether the emphasis is on development, wellbeing, families or working parents, or all of these potential outcomes. We need to listen to different voices about what quality means (educators, babies, families, educators) to come up with a dynamic conceptualisation of quality.

Measuring quality

Quality measurements are tools for evaluating some aspects of quality.

Structural quality measures help us evaluate important components of quality such as group size and ratios. There are also validated tools available that consider process quality, such as the ITERS and CLASS-Toddler. Combined, these aspects can offer a view of global quality. However, the global literature on measuring quality has not kept up with how we conceptualise quality. Measurement tools are just that- tools. They are helpful for evaluating some parts of quality, but they do not honour the dynamic and context-specific nature of quality.

Supporting quality

Small group sizes, low ratios, and a qualified workforce matter to achieve high-quality provision in the baby room.

Evidence is clear that the following elements are needed to support quality:

Group size of 6-8 babies

1:3 ratio of adults to babies

Baby-specific professional learning

RECOMMENDATIONS

▶ **Policy Recommendation 1**

The government has a key role in providing a clearer steer in relation to the purpose of the baby room and should learn from other countries about how to develop a collaborative sector-led vision of practice in the baby room, which in turn advances quality.

▶ **Policy Recommendation 2**

In consultation with the sector, the government should introduce regulation of group size in the baby room. This is particularly relevant as many baby rooms rapidly expand their provision. Consultation with the sector is needed to ensure that requirements are aligned with what is viable and can be supported among providers.

▶ **Policy Recommendation 3**

The government should support high-quality provision through a renewed focus on the workforce and a more specific support for baby educators. The government must ensure that there is professional learning specifically for baby room educators which is accredited and recognised.

OUR REPORT

You can access our report on our website, https://thebabyroom.blog/, as well as the Nuffield Foundation website.

We also invite you to take a physical copy of the summary of our report, available at our station.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Stay updated by visiting our website: https://thebabyroom.blog/

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Understanding, Defining, and Ensuring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care

Gillian Reece-Jones

Tricia Johnson

Outline

The issue being addressed is the quality of provision in all early years settings educating and caring for babies and young children. The poster provides an outline of the notion of quality, which is found to be difficult to define. Quality is a journey which may vary according to the given situation and it is complex. There are two main areas of quality, process quality (relationships) and structural quality (systems) (OECD, 2018). If we are to develop quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) these elements must be understood and agreed, and we must remember that it is quality as it is experienced by the child that should be our prime concern. Governance, standards and funding are core components of structural quality.

ECEC pedagogy must be child centred and relational. Children have a fundamental right to develop their personalities, abilities and potential within a caring and educational environment led by sensitive, responsive, qualified professionals.

Keywords

Early Years, Quality and the rights of children

Gillian Reece-Jones Early years specialist working with Sightlines Initiative collaborating with Early Education to promote and develop a caring, researching relational pedagogy for babies and young children;

Tricia Johnson Well qualified, experienced, professional Early Years practitioner, HE Lecturer, researcher and writer, whose aim is to ensure that babies and young children receive the highest level of education and care. Our organisation comes together to support policy makers and educators in understanding, defining and ensuring quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Our Key Issue is how policy and practice combine to ensure children enjoy the best possible Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), making recommendations for how we can ensure the quality of provision.

Understanding, Defining and Ensuring Quality in Early Childhood and Care

Who are we?
We are members of organisations who encompass a range of early years traditions and approaches. We have come together, united in the desire to support policy makers and educators in understanding, defining and ensuring quality in early childhood education and care. (ECEC).

How do we define quality?
Moss (2014), Reed and Walker (2017) concur that despite some notions of 'quality' being both complex and contested, there are agreed core elements that must be respected. We must remember that it is **quality as experienced by the child that is our prime concern.**

How do we ensure structural quality?
Governance, standards and funding are core components of structural quality. These can be considered the foundations for all other policies to support child development, learning and well being in ECEC settings. (OECD 2021). Gromanda and Richardson (2021) suggest that the best indicators of structural qualities might be **adult to child ratios and minimum level of staff qualifications.**

How do we ensure process quality?
Childhood is not a preparation for adult life, but the most fundamental stage. **Child centred relational pedagogy** is at the heart of early education and care.
Sims and Waniganayake, (2015) caution that external notions of 'quality' can erode **professional confidence and impede professional development impoverishing rather than enhancing children's educational experiences.**

Poster prepared for the Coalition by
Gillian Reece-Jones M.Ed. (Early Childhood), BA, PG Dip (SEN),Cert.Ed.
Dr Viki Veale, Ed D, FHEA, MA, BA,QTS
Patricia Johnson MA Early Childhood Education with Care

RECOMMENDATION ONE :
ECEC must have the funding to recruit and retain a self-sustaining profession with staff ratios that enable quality interactions in premises tailored to the needs of babies and young children.

RECOMMENDATION TWO :
ECEC pedagogy must meet the dynamic learning and developmental needs of babies and young children. Assessments of provision must be led by those in the profession with considerable experience and expertise.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:
Ongoing professional development through collaborative reflective analysis of practice in setting, and funded accredited external courses, must be provided for those working with babies and young children.

To read more, please scan this code:

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A Firm Foundation: Promoting Professional Development in Early Years

Joelle Feudjo Maneze   **Rod Parker Rees**   **Hannah Foster**

Outline

A highly skilled and well qualified workforce can ahve a significant impact on children's log-term outcomes and on the economic wellbeing of the country (DfE, 2023). However, England has one of the least qualified Early Years workforces in the developed world (Christie & Co, 2019). As members of a professional organisation concerened with the development of the Early Years workforce, we know that professional development underpins provision of the best possible early educational experiences for young children. The aim of this poster is to inform policy related to ethical, inclusive professional practice with young children.

Joelle Feudjo Maneze is an independent early years consultant who specialises in day care.

Rod Parker-Rees is a former Early Years teacher, Bed, PGCE and BA course lead and Editor in chief of 'Early Years': TACTYC's international research journal.

Hannah Foster is a Reception Class teacher who works in the independent sector.

TACTYC (Together And Commited To Young Children) was established in 1978 to offer support to all those concerned with the education and care of young children and those who work with them.

Keywords

Professional development, Early Education (0-5), Foundation Stage

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TACTYC
Together and Committed to Young Children

PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

TACTYC aims to inform policy related to sustainable, ethical practice with young children

A highly skilled, highly qualified workforce can have a significant impact on children's long-term outcomes and on the economic wellbeing of the country (DfE, 2023). As members of a professional organisation concerned with the development of the Early Years workforce, we know that professional development underpins provision of the best possible early educational experiences for young children. Our manifesto aims to inform policy related to ethical, inclusive professional practice with young children.

Recommendaiton 1:
Acknowledge the importance of Early Childhood Education and Care(ECEC) and appreciate the value of investing in the ECEC profession

Recommendation 2:
Acknowledge and celebrate the specialist knowledge base which underpins high quality professional practice.

Recommendation 3:
Recognise that professional development is a continuum from support for unqualified assistants to doctoral level study.

Recommendation 4:
Celebrate and promote diversity at all levels of the ECEC workforce.

To read or download our full manifesto, please scan this QR code →

www.tactyc.org.uk

Children's Rights in a Neo-liberal Milieu: Tensions and Challenges

Dr Mary Moloney

Outline

In the first five years, brain development occurs at a pace that exceeds any other stage in the life cycle. In the UK, 75% of parents with children under five are concerned about their emotional and mental wellbeing. Given the right relationships, environment and experiences, young children thrive.

They have a right to play (UNCRC, 1989), widely recognised as the appropriate mechanism for learning in early childhood. Yet neoliberalism denies this right to play, focusing instead on outcomes and investments. Adults do not gift play to children, nor can they take it away. It is the child's right. Government must value play and relational pedagogy as central to optimal brain development in early childhood.

Keywords

Children's rights, relational pedagogy, Neo-liberalism

Mary Moloney is a senior lecturer in early childhood education and care policy, at Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Ireland. She is an advocate for children's rights and professionalisation of ECEC.

Founded in 1898, **Mary Immaculate College (MIC)** is a university-level college of education and the liberal arts. It has 5,000 undergraduate students, studying early childhood, primary and post primary education. They key issue in this presentation relates to the relationship between relational pedagogy and play and optimal brain development in the first five years of life.

Children's Rights in a Neo-liberal Milieu: Tensions and Challenges

Early Brain Development and Physiological Development

Occurs at a pace that exceeds any other stage in the life

In 2023, 20% of children aged 8 -16 years in England had a probable mental health condition (Children's Commissioner, 2024)

International consensus on the importance of early childhood as the time when the foundations for cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioral and physical development are established

Relationships are the bedrock of early childhood education, and outside of a child's parent/guardian, early childhood educators are the most important people in young child's life.

Warm secure positive relationships are a vital protective factor in children's learning and development
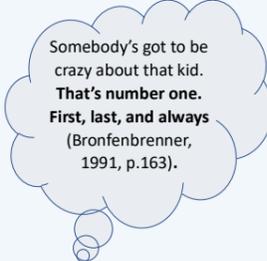
Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. **That's number one. First, last, and always** (Bronfenbrenner, 1991, p.163).

Yet, staff turnover in ECEC settings in England stands at 21% (DFE, 2023)

Children's Rights

All children have a right to quality early childhood education and care, from birth (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005)

The UNCRC, Article 31 assures a child's right to play. **Adults do not have the right to give or take away this right from children**.

Article 3 places a legal responsibility on all those working with and/or on behalf of children (i.e., policy makers, government, teachers, educators) to ensure that the '**best interests** 'of a child must be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

How does a Neo-liberal Ideology support children's rights?
How does it view early childhood education and care?
How does it position early childhood educators?

Neoliberalism and Children

Children as human capital – investment for the future

Children's Rights
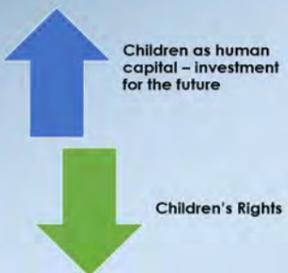
Focus upon accountability, interwined with the discourse of outcomes, investment and value for money

This ideology places inappropriate demands on young children....skills race, education race, talent race, but at **what cost to children?**

Relationships, Environments and Experiences Matter: Our youngest children require the best early childhood educators.

By three years of age, Ellie will have developed into a sophisticated walker, talker, negotiator, problem solver, relationship builder, and much more. Given the right **relationships, environment**, and **experiences** in the first years of life, Ellie can be anything, she wants to be: artist, dancer, composer, engineer, doctor, early childhood educator, teacher,... (Moloney, Skehill and Pope, in press).

Working with young children is highly skilled.
Educators are the most important people outside of the child's parent/primary caregiver. We must choose very carefully!

Ellie, just a few hours old

Collective Shared Responsibility

It is time to change how we view
- Young children and their educators
- The purpose of early childhood education and care
- Priorities for young children
- Acting in the best interests of young children

Pedagogy of Play in the Early Years: Missed Opportunities, Myths, and Misunderstandings

Aaron Bradbury   **Philippa Thompson**

Outline

In a recent document published by Ofsted it was stated that: 'play-based learning in Reception classes sometimes does no more than occupy children's time. If it does not challenge their thinking, problem-solving, persistence and collaboration, it is ineffective in developing their executive functioning. Such poorly planned play keeps children busy but does not support their development: their hands and bodies are active, but their minds are not.' *Ofsted (2024)*

This statement requires reflection from all. Why has this statement been made? Why has it caused an angry response from the sector? Is there a depth of understanding missing in practice and training surrounding the pedagogy of play? Is it the time for this discussion to be had?

Play being used as a vehicle for learning and a tool for assessment (Salcuni et al., 2017) is a common educational policy perspective in England but there are other perspectives outside education that are often hidden. Hughes (2001:56) suggests play is 'a fundamental learning mechanism' not to be harnessed but play for its own sake (Wood, 2024). It is also important to state the UNCRC perspective that every child has a right to play (1989?). Where is the research evidence for the type of play that has been hijacked proposed in policy documentation?

It is important for policy makers and practitioners alike to consider how play and learning are associated as suggested by Pramling-Samuelsson (2010). The influence of developmental psychology has continued for many years in early education and play pedagogy in training at all levels for practitioners is not consistent or non-existent. Wood and Hedges (2016) discuss the dichotomy of research and policy surrounding play and never has it seemed a more crucial time to raise this in the interests of children and their families. Both Bradbury (2024) and Thompson (2023) argue for training from a multi-disciplinary perspective on the importance of the pedagogy of play to continue the support of this important conversation.

Pedagogy of Play in Early Childhood: Missed opportunities, myths, and misunderstandings.

Dr Aaron Bradbury and Philippa Thompson

Introduction

In a recent document published by Ofsted (2024) it was stated that,

'Play-based learning in Reception classes sometimes does no more than occupy children's time. If it does not challenge their thinking, problem-solving, persistence and collaboration, it is ineffective in developing their executive functioning. Such poorly planned play keeps children busy but does not support their development: their hands and bodies are active, but their minds are not.

The evidence

It is important for policy makers and practitioners alike to consider how play and learning are associated as suggested by Pramling-Samuelsson (2010). Wood and Hedges (2016) discuss the dichotomy of research and policy surrounding play **and never has it seemed a more crucial time** to raise this in the interests of children and their families.

- Play being used as a vehicle for learning and a tool for assessment (Parker et al., 2022) is a common educational policy perspective in England but there are other perspectives outside education that are often hidden.

- Hughes (2001:56) suggests play is 'a fundamental learning mechanism' not to be harnessed and that adult free play is essential for the well-being of children.

- 'Play for its own sake' (Besio, 2017; Wood, 2024) provides a counter argument to outcomes driven approaches for our youngest children (0-8yrs).

- A strong consideration is required for the UNCRC perspective that every child has a right to play (1989).

- Where is the research evidence for the type of play that has been hijacked and proposed in policy documentation and by Ofsted?

- The heavy influence of developmental psychology has continued for many years in early education. This has potentially resulted in play pedagogy in training at all levels for practitioners is not consistent or non-existent.

- Both Bradbury (2024) and Thompson (2024) argue for training from a multi-disciplinary perspective on the importance of the pedagogy of play to continue the support of this important conversation.

Questions Raised

This statement requires reflection on the following questions:
- Why was this statement made?
- Why has it caused an angry response from the sector?
- Is there a depth of understanding missing in practice and training surrounding the pedagogy of play?
- Is it the time for this discussion to be had?

Policy Recommendations

1. The commissioning of a systematic review of research on young children's play.

2. High quality training for all practitioners on the pedagogy of play.

3. Develop further information frameworks for parents on the importance of play.

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Keywords

Play, Pedagogy, Policy

Nottingham Trent University

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Digital Play

Dr Alison Murray

Dr Pamela Murray

Outline

The amount of time children are spending online has increased expedentially. Pamela and Alison's study conducted with Dr Kristy Howells (Canterbury Christ Church University) explores what can be done to support them and encourage pure play.

Keywords

Play, online behaviour, wellbeing

Dr Alison Murray is a lecturer in Primary Education, Health and Wellbeing at University of Stirling

Dr Pamela Murray is a senior lecturer in leadership at University of Worcester

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The interruption and deconstruction of lure through 'play fake' behaviours using the *en vivo* time-phased intervention methodology to affirm children's agency when under online predatorial duress

Dr Pamela Murray, Dr Alison Murray, Dr Kristy Howells

Introduction

"In play the soul reveals itself" (Gillin, 1914:832)

Play can be originated in the imagination or in the real world, be solitary or with others, & be initiated by a child or adult (Bruce, 2023). Consequently, the child is versed to play within a range of social structures, all of which are fruitful for the child yet regrettably of potential abuse by the online 'play fake' wielding adverse influence (Murray & Murray, 2024).

Antecedents of behaviours associated with play have been linked with the 'seeking system', a primary process evolved from a mammalian need for survival (Wright & Panksepp, 2012). This neurobiological activity encases instinct & intuition & evolves to curiosity. A case is made for working alongside this inquisitive driver to ensure a vigilant accompaniment to a child's natural development through play which is activated in the real-world setting & arguably replicated by aspects of virtual play.

Methodology

To build capability & resourcefulness for a child's playtime online, a metacognitive design is adopted where metacognition concerns the capacity of awareness of cognitive processes and their regulation (Fleur, Bredeweg & van den Bos, 2021).

By implementing the (adapted) en vivo methodology (Murray, 2006; 2020), opportunity to engage with a dynamic phase characterised by contextual uncertainty for the child subjected to intrapersonal instability due to online susceptibility, is accessed.

Emergent vital moments for heightened awareness in the would-be child-friendly environment of the online playground are to be identified & collated. Disparities between a child's healthy play circumstance & that usurped by the online predator will be shown in terms of triggered ingredients of the established child's play psyche & behaviours.
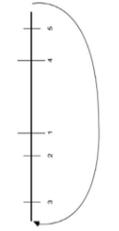
- **3** Medium Pre-start en vivo conditions
- **2** Short Pre-start en vivo conditions
- **1** Start en vivo conditions
- **1-4** Onset en vivo conditions
- **4-5** Post en vivo conditions
- **5-3** Long Pre-start en vivo conditions

To pre -sensitise child & caretaker to conceivable exposure to negative online influences, 'play indicators' for the play participant will be traced to reveal optimal play readiness along with that which infers an increased state of vulnerability. The time phases depicted in the en vivo schematic serve to anchor the lead-up to a familiarised play patterns & to reveal 'tell-tale' pathway deviations. By decompartmentalising the approach taken by the child, an imprint of the play participant style to playing will be etched & from there, a blueprint for designing a child's bespoke preparation for safer play, formed.

An experiential workshop designed to develop agency for the period equating to being under online predatorial duress is envisaged. Agency on the part of the child is projected to validate the self-worth & underpin the development of personal efficacy (Murray & Murray, 2024).

Core Deliverables

To online play with excitement & without fear by empowering the efficacy of the player by tracing the authenticity of the experience

- DESIGN, CREATE & FACILITATE THE EN VIVO PLAY WORKSHOP - Provide caretakers with the knowledge & tools to navigate the experience of digital play for their children
- USE EMPIRICAL & EXPERIENTIAL WISDOM - Establish the contemporary perspective for online play using evidence-based research & practice
- EMPOWER CARETAKERS - Share awareness of the en vivo schematic to correspond with time phases of the child's play pattern & imprint
- ENCOURAGE OPEN DIALOGUES - Foster an environment where children feel empowered to discuss their online experiences with trusted caretakers
- BUILD ACUMEN - Record normalised activities involved at 'play times' by using the long 'pre-start' schematic for when play goes well
- MAKE A PICTURE WITH CHILD & CARETAKER - Outline medium & short pre-start actions & habits related to healthy play conditions
- EXPOSE DEVIATION FROM ROUTINED OCCURENCES - To enhance watchfulness & recognise online predatory tactics during the alerted time phase/s
- MATCH & FIT - Coordinate development of tactics & skills to enhance resilience & agency on the part of the child
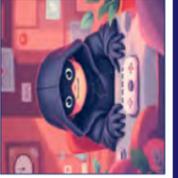
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The Power of Play: Building a Creative Britain

Dr Amanda Norman

Outline

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 31 (1989) states all children have a right to play, and whilst they may play in various ways, depending upon social, cultural, and environmental contexts, playing remains a universal part of development and learning which nurtures children's growth as complex and capable human beings. Furthermore, in today's digital age, children are growing up in times of rapid change so opportunities for a range of play experiences are increasingly crucial to building a creative society. Play therefore facilities opportunities for individuals to develop resilience, work collaboratively, be creative and flexible.

Keywords

(Re)Introducing a Play Strategy for the Early Years across local communities

Dr Amanda Norman is co-lead of the early year working lead with the Children's Alliance. She is also a Senior Lecturer (early years) at the University of Winchester.

The key issues are about addressing the value of play, recognising the changing needs of communities within the early years.

Early Maths Builds Better Futures

Sue Gifford

Catherine Gripton

Outline

Pre-school maths is the strongest predictor of later school achievement and success in entering the workforce. Children who start behind, stay behind, with the attainment gap widening throughout school. Current curricula (birth to 7) are not based on research evidence about the key predictors of later success.

Early years practitioners and teachers need support to develop professional knowledge and positive attitudes towards teaching maths. Early maths needs to be a national priority, with benefits to individuals' life chances, national attitudes and the economy. Maths education is an equity issue – and cheaper to remedy in the early years than later.

Keywords

Early years, mathematics, professional development

Dr Sue Gifford (University of Roehampton) has published and advised various bodies on early maths, including writing DfE-funded programmes for early years practitioners.

Dr Catherine Gripton (University of Nottingham) is an Associate Professor who researches mathematics education policy and practice in early and primary education.

The Early Childhood Maths Group is a group of early years mathematics practitioners, educators and researchers, who work together to promote mathematics, Birth to 7. In mathematics, children who start behind, stay behind throughout schooling. A more evidence-based curriculum and assessment system supported by effective professional development are needed.

Early maths builds future lives

Dr Sue Gifford (University of Roehampton) & Dr Catherine Gripton (University of Nottingham)

The problem → educational disadvantage

Children who start behind, stay behind, with the attainment gap widening throughout school, despite interventions and specialist teaching[1]. Currently, children from poorer backgrounds, those with SEN and the summer born are more likely to start school on a mathematical back foot, unlikely to catch up throughout their school careers.

The solution → early maths

Children's early maths understanding is the strongest predictor of later school achievement and success in entering the workforce[2]. Unfortunately, current curriculum and assessment requirements for under-7s are not based on research. These should focus on the foundational concepts that predict later maths attainment include counting and number meanings, and also pattern recognition and spatial thinking[3]. Early educators need support to develop professional knowledge about these, particularly those who feel less confidence with maths.

Early maths development needs to be a national priority, with benefits to children's life chances, national attitudes and the economy.

Investing in early maths makes economic sense: for every £1 spent on a preschool child, £7 has to be spent to have the same impact with an adolescent[4].

What needs to happen?

1 **Rebalance the early years maths curriculum and pedagogy so it is evidence-based and age-appropriate,** focusing on predictive foundational concepts in number, pattern and spatial reasoning - and taught through guided play and problem solving.

2 **Restructure assessment in early years and KS1 to focus on the key foundational concepts shown to lead to future success in maths,** removing the flawed Reception Baseline Assessment and revising the maths Early Learning Goals.

3 **Increase maths professional development for early years staff - and also senior leaders and Ofsted inspectors.** Investment in early years saves money in the long term and improves children's success at school and their future lives.

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earlymaths.org

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Strengthening Early Years Expertise: Recommendations for Teacher Development and Leadership

Eleanor Milligan

Janet Morris

Outline

Early education is critical for children's lifelong development. However systemic gaps persist in training, leadership, and professional growth for those working within it.

The current Core Content Framework for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Early Career Framework (ECF) inadequately addresses early learning, despite the 2012 Nutbrown Review recommendations.

School leadership training often overlooks the distinct needs of this phase, treating primary education as a homogeneous stage focused on outcomes in year six.

Reception teachers face limited opportunities for structured professional advancement. This poster presents three actionable recommendations to ensure teachers and leaders are well-equipped to support this foundational stage of education effectively.

Keywords

Early Years a distinct phase, continuing professional development, knowledgeable primary schools leadership

Eleanor Milligan is a former reception class teacher who now lectures in early years and primary education at University of East Anglia.

Janet Morris is a senior lecturer in early years at the University of Greenwich.

Strengthening Early Years Expertise: Recommendations for Teacher Development and Leadership

Presented by Eleanor Milligan and Janet Morris

Early education is critical for children's lifelong development (Archer et al 2021). However systemic gaps persist in training, leadership, and professional growth for those working within it (Campbell-Barr et al., 2020). As liminal professionals physically located within primary schools but whose pedagogic practice is guided by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), reception class teachers face particular challenges which are not fully captured in studies which amalgamate data from different phases.

The Reception Class Teacher Network, established in February 2024, provides a community of practice which supports research informed professional development and advocates for this crucial group of teachers, working within the EYFS in a primary school setting. The targeted support for this particular teaching community came about through an initiative at the University of East Anglia (UEA), School of Education and Lifelong Learning. It was founded and is coordinated through the collective efforts of Eleanor Milligan (UEA), Janet Morris (University of Greenwich), Lorna Williams (University of Worcester) and Viki Veale (St Mary's University), all of whom were reception class teachers themselves and who undertake research in the fields of early education and initial teacher education.

The Issue with Teacher Training

The current Core Content Framework (CCF) for initial teacher education (ITE) and Early Career Framework (ECF) inadequately addresses early learning, despite the 2012 Nutbrown Review recommendations (Early Education 2023).

Recommendation – Teacher Training

The Core Content Framework for initial teacher training and Early Career Framework must be reviewed, in line with the findings of the 2012 Nutbrown review, to include greater focus on early development in all courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status.

The Issue with Leadership

School leadership training often overlooks the distinct needs of the Early Years phase, treating primary education as a homogeneous stage focused on outcomes in year six, leaving leaders ill-equipped to manage early years provision effectively (Rodd 2006).

Recommendation – Leadership

Ensure school leaders ground the management of reception classes first and foremost in the principles and practice of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. Require school leaders to have sufficient training and experience across all three primary school key stages to lead effectively.

The Issue with Professional Development

Reception class teachers face limited opportunities for structured professional development and advancement particularly focussed on this unique and critical phase of education (Nutbrown 2012).

Recommendation – Teacher Development

The continued professional development of reception class teachers must be supported through accredited pathways, professional networks and access to research pertinent to the developmental stage and pedagogy of early childhood.

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Supporting Young Children's Physical Development through Tailored Motor Competency Interventions within a School Setting

Dr Kristy Howells

Ellie Huggett

Outline

Early childhood physical activity engagement alongside physical and motor development are the cornerstones of long term psychological and physical well-being. Children with poor levels of motor competency have issues with learning to read and write, and playing sports, since they find it difficult to hit, kick or catch a ball. There are academic challenges from inadequate hand-eye coordination which may impact behaviour and the ability to pay attention.

However, these difficulties in motor competency can be improved through physical activity interventions within bespoke scheme of work. Significant improvements can be made, this poster will show how this is possible.

Keywords

Early years, motor competency, physical development, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, coordination, core strength, professional development, graduate workforce

Kristy Howells is a Reader in Children's Health at Canterbury Christ Church University and works collaboratively with Ellie.

Ellie Huggett is the Physical Education and Health lead within the primary school setting.

The key issue we work on together is looking at how to improve children's physical development through bespoke whole class motor competency schemes of work.

Canterbury Christ Church University

Supporting Young Children's Physical Development through Tailored Motor Competency Interventions within a School Setting.
Dr Kristy Howells and Ellie Huggett

- **Issue Overview**

Children are **developmentally behind** in motor competency (MC) levels for fine, gross motor skills plus in core strength and coordination.

Children with poor levels of motor competency have **issues with learning to read and write**, and playing sports, since they find it difficult to hit, kick or catch a ball.

Challenges from **inadequate hand-eye coordination may impact behaviour** and the ability to pay attention.

Motor competency is critical for development of healthy bodies as well as social emotional wellbeing.

- **Evidence of Success**

Motor competency levels **can be improved and sustained** through physical activity interventions within bespoke scheme of work.

Significant improvements for each of the success criteria for the skills: galloping, sliding, dribbling, underarm rolling, catching, use of scissors, hopping (see figure), running, climbing and kicking.

- **Intervention Strategy**

Tailored MC interventions embed within Scheme of Work, (SOW), warm up activities, as well as play times to enhance physical development.

Skills were tracked over 19 weeks, (3 academic terms, terms 4, 5 and 6 in Spring – Summer) and were assessed at start and end of each term. SOWs were adapted to challenge and support the children in their progressions.

- **Call to Action**

1) **Motor competency interventions** need to be implemented in *all* schools with support from practitioner / teacher observations.

2) Implementation into policy for **national level school-based interventions** to develop fine motor skills, gross motor skills, coordination and core strength in all children to improve physical development nationally leading to greater physical activity participation levels.

3) **More training in schools as CPD and university** settings as initial training of how to develop motor competencies and how to observe motor competency.
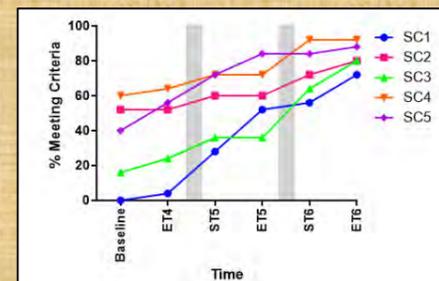
Key Reference:
Huggett and Howells (2024) Supporting Young Children's Physical Development through Tailored Motor Competency Interventions within a School Setting. *Children 11 (9), 1122. Accessible via* the QR Code.

Overview

Board 2 | Primary Education and Children's Rights and Wellbeing
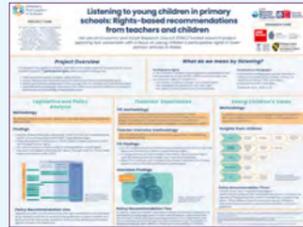
Sarah Chicken and Jackie Tyree

Children's Rights

Karen Fox and children

Children Voices in Curriculum Design

Artemis Bear and Justin Maroy

Democratic Education
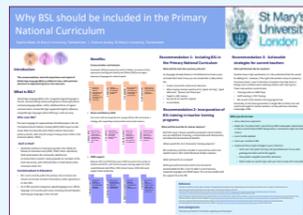
Sophie Baker and Corinne Anstey

Introducing British Sign Language in the Primary Curriculum

Paul Wright and Tamsin Brewis

Creating a minister for children
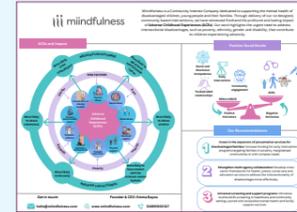
Emma Bayou

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Jane Payler, Stephanie Bennett and Victoria Cooper

Children with incarcerated parents
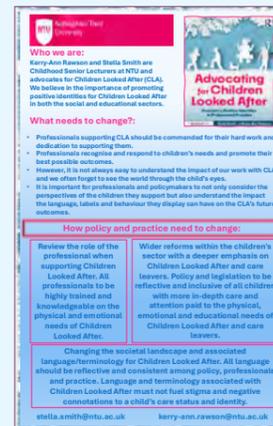
Kerry Ann Rawsom and Stella Smith

Children Looked After
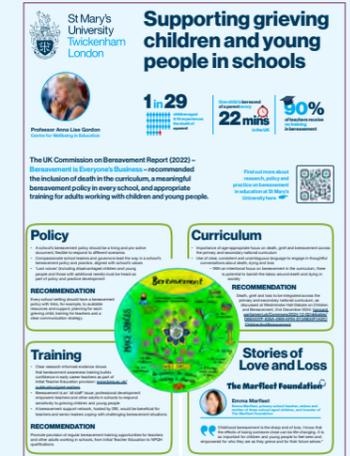
AnnaLise Gordon and Emma Marfleet

Bereavement Education

Jill Robinson

More Than a Score

Clare Martin

SEND

Listening to Young Children in Primary Schools: Rights-Based Recommendations From Teachers and Children

Sarah Chicken **Jackie Tyree**

Outline

Our project explores young children's participative rights (being heard and involved in decision making) in primary education in Wales. Building on a legislative and policy analysis, we have worked with initial teacher educators (ITE), teachers, and young children themselves.

Findings suggest a strong policy framework in Wales, but that more guidance is needed on how to enact participatory pedagogies in practice. ITE in Wales is not reflective of the United Nations Framework of Human Rights, and ITE educators have called for more support. In classroom practice, there are many complex enablers and barriers to delivering a truly participatory education.

Keywords

Children's rights, Child voice, Participatory pedagogies

Dr Sarah Chicken is Associate Professor of Childhood and Social Justice at UWE.

Dr Jacky Tyrie is a Senior Lecturer at Swansea University.

Children's Participation in Schools is an ESRC funded collaborative research project between UWE, Cardiff Metropolitan University, Swansea University, and the UWTSD.

Key Issue: Understanding and supporting the enactment of young children's participative rights (Article 12, UNCRC) in early education.

Listening to young children in primary schools: Rights-based recommendations from teachers and children

We are an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded research project spanning four universities with a focus on young children's participative rights in lower primary schools in Wales.

PROJECT TEAM
Dr Sarah Chicken – Principal Investigator
Dr Jacky Tyrie – Co-Investigator
Dr Alison Murphy – Co-Investigator
Dr Jane-Waters Davies – Co-Investigator
Dr Jennie Clement – Co-Investigator
Professor Jane Williams – Co-Investigator
Louise Roberts – Research Associate
Dr Patrizio DeRossi – Research Associate
Jacqui Lewis – Research Associate
Georgia Fee – Research Administrator

ORGANISATIONS

Project Overview
This research has explored children's, teachers', and student teacher's perspectives on young children's (aged 5-7) participative rights. Here we present findings that;

- Chart the current picture in Welsh policy and law.
- Survey initial teacher education provision related to children's participative rights.
- Explore participative pedagogies in focus groups with ITE students and teacher educators.
- Use participative pedagogic approaches as a stimulus to explore children's and teacher's experiences and knowledge of participative rights.

What do we mean by listening?

Participative Rights
In this research, children's participation is understood from the perspective of the UNCRC (1989) and so includes the participative rights of children to:
- be heard, including through non-verbal means.
- be respected as persons in their own right.
- be able to make choices and communicate.

Participatory Pedagogies
Participatory pedagogies can be defined as classroom modes which enable children to 'express and enact their own ideas, perspectives and knowledge'.
(Mascadri et al., 2021, p. 2).

#### Legislative and Policy Analysis

Methodology
We analysed Welsh documents, relevant to education and published between 1999 and 2023.

Findings
- Majority of education policy documents (2000 to 2020) had no references to UNCRC / Human Rights Education (HRE) / participative rights.
- Practical guidance for educators in Wales (Hwb) includes education 'about' and through human rights.
- The new Curriculum for Wales (2021) is underpinned by Human Rights Education and details extensively the 'about', 'through' and 'for' of the United Nations Framework of HRE (2011).

Policy Recommendation One
Legislative & policy commitments to human rights education must be backed up by detailed explanations and practical guidance to support students and teachers in their role as duty-bearers to enact young children's participative rights in schools and classrooms.

Teachers' Experiences

ITE methodology
A survey was sent to all higher education institution (HEI)-school partnerships of initial teacher education (ITE) across Wales, and six focus groups took place with student teachers and teacher educators to explore the teaching of participatory pedagogies and participative rights.

Teacher Interview methodology
We interviewed primary school teachers to gauge their understanding of participative rights.

ITE Findings
- No ITE programme documentation contained explicit aims or learning objectives related to children's participative rights.
- ITE programmes provided limited information about human rights and the development of related roles and responsibilities.
- Data from focus groups indicated that student teachers had limited opportunity to consider participatory pedagogies.

Interview Findings

Policy Recommendation Two
In order to maximise enablers and reduce barriers to teachers' enactment of participatory pedagogies, policy makers need to ensure supportive school environment, culture and associated expectations from stakeholders, and ensure professional learning opportunities for teachers and ITE students to develop pedagogic skills related to listening and responding to children.

Young Children's Views

Methodology
A children's advisory board was engaged during the research to allow us to understand children's views on what principles the research should follow.

Insights from children

Policy Recommendation Three
Children may use a range of languages a communicating about their early years education and they are capable of expressing their wishes and feelings to supporting adults. Policy Makers should incorporate young children's views and experiences into educational provision and policy guidance.

Children's Participation in Schools

Cardiff Metropolitan University | Prifysgol Metropolitan Caerdydd

ESRC Education Research Programme — Empowering educators

UKRI Economic and Social Research Council

Prifysgol Abertawe Swansea University

UWE Bristol

Prifysgol Cymru Y Drindod Dewi Sant University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The Power of Children's Voice to Create a Diverse and Inclusive Curriculum

Karen Fox

Outline

The poster highlights ways children were enabled to have a voice about their identity and how it is represented; in turn developing knowledge of how children perceive the books that they read enables teachers to go beyond thinking about how to use books with children to how books are experienced by children.

Representation in children's literature has been a focus for many research studies, fewer studies have focused on children's perceptions of how they view themselves in the books that they read. Giving voice to children empowers them to make positive contributions and change to the curriculum that they are presented with in school.

Keywords

Representation, children's voice, Primary education

Karen Fox is a Senior Lecturer in Primary English and is researching with the children at Our Lady Immaculate on identity and representation.

Angelina and Vishvan are Year 6 children who have been researching with Karen and are passionate about the power of children's voice.

Our Lady Immaculate Catholic Primary School is situated in South West London where they foster a love of learning.

St Mary's University is an inclusive London campus university.

The power of children's voices to create a diverse and inclusive curriculum

Twenty three children from Our Lady Immaculate Primary school took part in a collaborative research project with St Mary's University. The project is called Children's Literature and identity: How do children see themselves in the books that they read? This is their poster. Scan the QR code for more information about the project.

Why is listening to children important?

Listening to the voices of children about their identity and how it is represented in the books that they read develops teachers understanding of how children perceive the books they read. Teachers are then enabled to go beyond thinking about how to use books with children to how books are experienced by children. **Giving voice to children empowers them to make positive contributions** and changes to their curriculum.

I've influenced 2 things at the school. I've recommended a book that's now in the library and the next year 5's are going to learn about somebody I showed to Miss B and she's been meaning to look at a women in art.

Books are for everyone

Books need to be accessible to everyone. Some children may only have access to books through school which is why it is so important for **schools to have diverse books**. The **local libraries should be promoted** and funding given **to improve school libraries.**

My idea is to include storytelling of international traditions to ensure diversity is respected and familiar among children like us.

Everyone should be able to see themselves in the books they read

We asked the children in our school if there was a book where you can see yourself as one of the characters? **33%** said that there wasn't – we think that this isn't good enough.

We also asked have you seen your name in a book? **47%** of children said **NO!**

We need a wider range of names for different countries and cultures.
When we can't see ourselves in books it makes us feel left out and different.

IT MATTERS WHAT WE THINK!

A diverse and inclusive curriculum that includes the community

The **curriculum** should be **regularly reviewed** to ensure that it remains current to today's ever-changing world so that children can resonate with their own lives and problems. It should **include a wide range of authors, and include books that are both mirrors and windows** so that children build a deeper understanding of diversity.

It is important the the government encourages **school and wider community events** so that children can come together to share ideas and learn from each other.

There should be a wide variation of names in a book because I barely ever see my name in a book. And then like there are lots of other names that we don't really see in books they mainly use like these popular names.

Listen to children's voices

Delightful
Important
Vital
Exquisite
Righteous
Special
Excellent

Find out more here!

Authors: Aleiah, Leona, Angelina, Andrina, Isabella, Jovina, Trivin, Krish, Abraham, Vishvan, Conor, Theo, Ciaran, Kitty, Alicia, Ivy-Belle, Ava, Niamh, Emilia, Eva, Elizabeth, Claudia, Harriet

St Mary's University Twickenham London

St Mary's University Twickenham London

The Gold, Silver and Bronze Policy Recommendations to Improve Child Health and Wellbeing in the UK

Paul Wright

Tamsin Brewis

Outline

The Children's Alliance, a coalition of over 200 organisations, presents ground-breaking policy recommendations to improve child health and wellbeing in the UK. Backed by robust evidence, these recommendations aim to create a healthier and happier future for all children.

Join us in advocating for a society where every child thrives.

Keywords

Policy, Junk Food Tax, Social Media, Play, Early Years, Physical Activity, Mental Health, Poverty, Children

Paul Wright is the Public Health & Political Director of the Children's Alliance.

Tamsin Brewis is the Director of the Children's Alliance Charity.

The Children's Alliance campaigns for key policy recommendations to be enacted such as a Cabinet Minister for Children. We also have a significant Community approach, providing monies to help young people to be able to swim/active safely in water.

LET'S PLACE A HEART AT THE CENTRE OF GOVERNMENT TO SPEAK FOR OUR CHILDREN!

We call upon government to re-instate the previous Department for Children, School & Families (2007-10).

Put a CHAMPION at the HEART of Government

Alongside a Department for Children, the CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE also call for the Development of a set collaborative National Strategies that each government in the UK implement to improve the lives of children and young people.

Such strategies would identify a vision, key evidence-based priorities, funding and proposed measurable outcomes. The strategies should be 3-5 years in duration, driven through cross-governmental work led by the Secretary of State in the Department of Children, Schools and Families.

Initiatives

There are numerous evidence based policies from Poverty, Food, Emotional Health, the Early Years, Physical Activity and the rising worries from Social Media.

We have produced a guide of Gold, Silver & Bronze recommendations to assist such a newly formed Department for Children.

Funding

Tax Big Tech & Junk Food to Fund Children's Health & Well-being. Ring-fence the proceeds to support child, youth and family initiatives.

We have 50+ Parliamentarians supporting, over 25,000 members of the public and 100's of professional organisations.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS, PLEASE CONTACT PAUL WRIGHT - DIRECTOR OF THE CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE - PAUL.WRIGHT@CHILDRENSALLIANCE.ORG.UK OR AT 07834328903

A Democratic Education

Justin Maroy

Artemis Bear

Outline

In order to address the issues of inequality, accessibility and justice, a democratic approach to education will leave enough space for each child to shape their own curriculum in partnership with their teachers, educators and learning facilitators, in order for to achieve the aims of helping each child to fully develop their own personality, talents and abilities.

Keywords

Inequality, Accessibility and Justice

Justin Maroy is CEO of Phoenix Education. Founded at the House of Lords in 2000 Phoenix Education possesses 25 years' experience as a leading voice promoting the practical implementation of democratic education. Phoenix works with mainstream schools and progressive innovators outside of the traditional education system to expand norms of what school can and should be.

Artemis Bear is the Head of Freedom to Learn, the UK's largest network of home educating families.

Why British Sign Language should be included in the National Curriculum and Teacher Training Programs

Sophie Baker

Corinne Anstey

Outline

BSL should be included in the National Curriculum and teacher training to support teachers to support students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have SEND.

Keywords

Education, Support, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

I am writing my dissertation on why BSL should be taught in the classroom, and want to raise concern and address the need for BSL to be taught in school to support all children. BSL aids all children and it is a key life skill for children to know BSL so that they can communicate and help others later in life if it is needed. Trainee teachers should also be taught BSL to support all of their students.

St Mary's University Twickenham London

Why BSL should be included in the Primary National Curriculum

Sophie Baker, St Mary's University, Twickenham | Corinne Anstey, St Mary's University, Twickenham

St Mary's University London

Introduction

This recommendation notes the importance and impact of British Sign Language (BSL) on children's lives, with particular attention to implementing this in the classroom.

What is BSL?

British Sign Language (BSL) is the recognised signed language in the UK, communicating visually with gestures, facial expressions and body language (Baker, 2025). Additional forms of signed communication include SSE (Sign Supported English), Makaton, and global sign languages (often differing in each country).

Who uses BSL?

The main language for approximately 145,000 people in the UK. The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) 2023 report on BSL shows 38% of profoundly deaf children attend mainstream primary schools, with only 9% using or having access to BSL in the classroom (Baker, 2025).

deaf vs Deaf

- Medically, deafness is hearing loss greater than 35dB, but follows an individual scale (WHO, 2024). When capitalised, Deaf encompasses the community, identity and communication involved. Hearing people are members of the Deaf community, with CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) often immersed within this.

Contextualised in Education

- BSL is not currently within the primary UK curriculum, but schools can choose to teach it themselves, either generally or as their MFL.
- 41 of 195 countries recognise a signed language as an official language in its country with some, including USA and Sweden teaching sign language in their schools.

Benefits:

Communication and Inclusion

Amankwah (2024) promotes the motif of children as mosaics of their experiences and linguistic identity and Ofsted (2023) encourage a diversity of languages for cultural capital.

1. Cultural exposure
- Immersing children to different cultures and building self respect for people in the Deaf community.

2. Cognition
- Holding a conversation in sign language has cognitive benefits.

3. Engagement
- BSL is interesting and different, something children enjoy and learning links to personality and interests.

4. Self-expression
- Involving facial expressions, BSL and body language help children find a new way to express themselves.

Motor and Memory Skills

Fine motor skills are imperative for young children, BSL can become a strategy, also supporting communication and muscle memory.

1. Motor skills
- BSL has similar benefits to the "Funky Fingers" activities where relating these intervention things help children to work on fine motor skills.

2. Cognition
- Finger spelling supports spelling and word order through muscle memory.

3. Number sense
- Rather than counting on fingers and toes in BSL, it means children have number signs that support 1:1 correspondence.

4. Synonyms
- With 10% of the words in English, one sign can have different meanings. This helps children understand the concept of synonyms.

SEND support

Between 2015 and 2024 there was a 140% increase in the number of children with EHCPs, with 25.6% of pupils receiving support for SLCN needs (National Audit Office, 2024; School Census, 2024). BSL could support these students by:

1. Physical stimulus
- Signing is an outlet for stimulating and impacted children with other physical behaviours.

2. Communicate basic
- Children with limited spoken language/ non-verbal can use this as a basic means to communicate.

3. Behaviour management
- Fidgets and gestures accompany instructions for comprehension.

4. Empathy
- BSL requires facial expressions, a target for some children with SEND, and as an integrated outlet for behaviour, can relieve other negative behaviours.

Recommendation 1: Including BSL in the Primary National Curriculum

What will this look like in primary schools?

As languages already feature in the National Curriculum, why not teach BSL? Here's how you can include BSL in daily school life:

- Posters around the school and classroom
- When saying common words such as 'good morning', 'good afternoon', 'please' and 'thank you'
- Taught in MFL lessons
- Key words for specific subjects
- In assemblies

Recommendation 2: Incorporation of BSL training in teacher training programs

What will this look like for trainee teachers?

With BSL input, trainees would be prepared to teach children who are deaf/hard of hearing, communicate with deaf parents, and allow the forementioned benefits.

Where would this sit in the teacher training program?

BSL vocabulary could be included in every lecture with more specific input in MFL and Professional Studies modules.

What will need to be removed?

Nothing would necessarily need to be removed to accommodate for BSL; it can fit within current lectures, especially languages and SEND topics. This can be possible with the support from the DfE.

Recommendation 3: Actionable strategies for current teachers

What will this look like for teachers?

Teachers have a high workload as it is. We understand that this would be adding to it. However, if the right interventions are put in place by the Government, it won't add stress to teachers but help them in feeling more confident when teaching children with hearing loss.

These interventions could include:
- Training in BSL on INSET days
- Staff meetings / CPD Training
- BSL as part of the teacher training programmes

Eventually, as the future generation is taught BSL at school, less will need to be taught to trainee teachers, as they will have a baseline knowledge of BSL.

What you can do now:
- Ask us about our experience
- Watch the 'The Silent Child' a short film by NDCS ambassador Rachel Shenton or have a read of Sacks (1989) 'Seeing Voices,' a wonderful insight into Deaf culture.
- Learn the BSL alphabet
- Learn your numbers in BSL
- Implement these simple strategies in your classroom:
  - Teach your class 'good morning' and 'good afternoon' to use when greeting each other and for the register.
  - Have posters using BSL around the classroom.
  - Watch videos on specific signs with your class to show off in assemblies.

ACEs-Intersectionality and Impact

Emma Bayou

Outline

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) disproportionately affect children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with intersectional factors such as poverty, ethnicity, gender, and disability compounding their likelihood and impact. These early adversities, ranging from abuse and neglect to parental incarceration, are linked to negative outcomes across the life course. These include poor physical and mental health, reduced educational attainment, and socioeconomic challenges. Understanding the interconnected nature of these disadvantages is crucial for addressing their root causes and mitigating their long-term impact on individuals and communities.

Keywords

Adverse Childhood Exepriences, disadvantage, impact on life course

Emma Bayou Mental health specialist, founder and CEO of Miindfulness CIC. Emma has a background in education prior to founding Miindfulness and is also a member of the Cross Party Parliamentary Group for a Fit and Healthy Childhood.

Miindfulness CIC is a community interest company providing mental health support for disadvantaged children, young people and their families through co-design and delivery of impactful community based initiatives. Through this work we have witnessed first hand the devastating impact of ACEs across the life course and the need for initiatives to address the intersectionality of disadvantages which lead to children experiencing adversity.

Miindfulness is a Community Interest Company dedicated to supporting the mental health of disadvantaged children, young people and their families. Through delivery of our co-designed, community based interventions, we have witnessed firsthand the profound and lasting impact of **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**. Our work highlights the urgent need to address intersectional disadvantages, such as poverty, ethnicity, gender and disability, that contribute to children experiencing adversity.
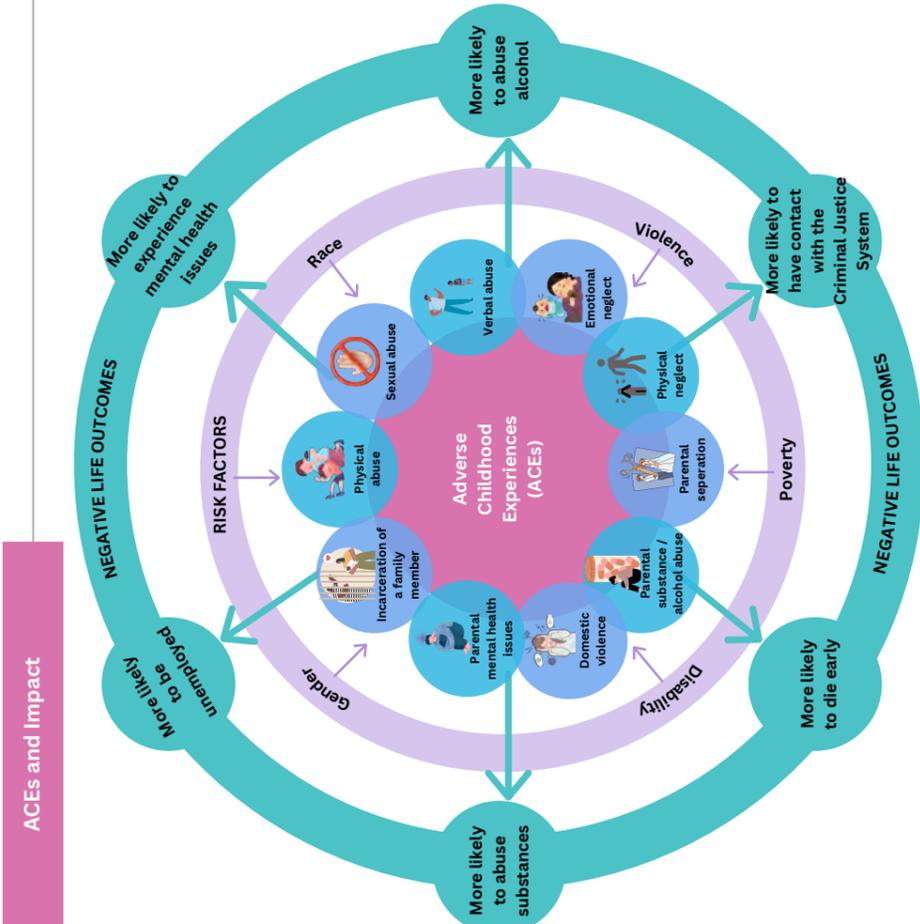
Positive Social Bonds

Our Recommendations

Invest in the expansion of preventative services for disadvantaged families: Increase funding for early intervention programs targeting families in poverty, marginalised communities or with complex needs.

Strengthen multi-agency collaboration: Develop cross-sector frameworks for health, justice, social care and education services to address the intersectionality of disadvantages more effectively.

Universal screening and support programs: Introduce routine ACEs screening in healthcare and community settings, paired with accessible mental health and family support services.

ACEs and Impact

Get in touch:

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Invisible Children of Prisoners – who are they, where are they, and what do they need?

Emeritus Prof. Jane Payler

Prof. Victoria Cooper

Dr Stephanie Bennett

Outline

The impact of parental imprisonment on children is known to be detrimental to their development and future life. Yet the support currently available to those experiencing family imprisonment is inadequate and underfunded. The number of children impacted annually by parental imprisonment in England and Wales is unknown as no formal records are kept but is estimated to be around 200,000. The researchers undertook a two-year evaluation of the needs for and impact of the YSS Families First service. The service had a significant impact on children and families through offering needs-based family support, alongside practical help and emotion/trauma focused interventions.

Keywords

Children and families of prisoners; child development; support needs

Emeritus Professor Jane Payler (OU) Emeritus Professor of Education (Early Years) with 30 years' experience of research, teaching and professional workforce development.

Professor Victoria Cooper (OU) Professor of Childhood & Youth Studies with 28 years' experience in child-focused research, teaching and curriculum-development.

Dr Stephanie Bennett (University of Chichester) Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Forensic Psychology, Chartered Research Psychologist and Programme Lead for BSc Criminology.

The Open University (OU) is a public research university. It is the largest university by number of students in the UK and hosts the **Children's Research Centre**.

YSS is a Worcestershire charity supporting marginalised children/young people and families.

The problem and the study

Secrecy and stigma typically surround parental imprisonment, leading to further isolation for children. Overlooked and stigmatised, children of prisoners remain marginalised in the UK.

Very little is known about the needs of children of prisoners, or the actual number who are affected. Currently, no formal UK policies are tasked with routine identification of their needs.

Estimates range from

200,000 – 312,000

children of prisoners in England and Wales

The Children's Research Centre (CRC) in partnership with YSS (Worcestershire charity supporting marginalised children/young people/families) undertook a two-year evaluation of the YSS Families First (FF) project (2020–2022) – a new program of targeted support for children/families of prisoners, with financial support from Worcestershire County Council.

The research questions

- What is the extent of need for support for children and families of prisoners?
- How can Families First provide targeted support for children and families of prisoners?
- What is the impact of Families First support?

The mixed methods study incorporated quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Findings

Our research reveals the impact of *Families First* to be life-changing for children and families and our research report, launched at the Houses of Parliament, contributes to a better understanding of the impact that responsive, needs-based support can have on the lives of children and families affected by parental imprisonment.

Listening to children of prisoners

Children of prisoners emphasise what is important to them regarding 'what works' in support.

They stress the importance of being listened to through talking to trusted adults outside of the family.

Fun and respite

Being able to engage in activities, supported by practitioners, which support diverse voices, and which are fun provides a brief respite from challenging circumstances.

strength-based support

Adopting strength-based approach enables children to explore their emotions, develop confidence in their skills and self-reliance and process traumatic experiences.

Impact and policy recommendations

Our research recommends that an expansion in support is needed and considers the type of responsive, needs-based support that Families First provide in meeting the needs of children/families and explore channels through which services can be expanded nationally.

Recommendations

- **Expand FF-type needs based**, responsive support and seek pathways through which these services can be expanded to meet national need.
- **Notify local authorities:** Police & courts need to notify local authorities when they arrest or sentence someone who has children. The sooner the support is provided for children & families the better the chance of interruption of Adverse Childhood Experience.
- **Vulnerable children:** Education authorities should treat children of prisoners as vulnerable, as are children in care, and prioritise support for their needs.
- **Data collection:** Ensure that data is collected regularly on the number of children affected by family imprisonment.
- **Multiagency policy & service review:** Review & revise national & local policies (education, health & social care) for service provision for parents & children experiencing family imprisonment from sentencing, throughout imprisonment & beyond release.

Findings from our research have fed into the development of a handbook to support families.

This research has broader implications for how targeted support of this kind can be adopted by other services to provide much needed support for children.

Examples of resources produced by children
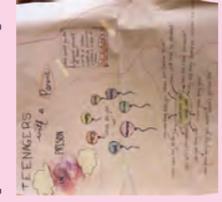
'Who were they trying to impress?'

'Life choices' Board game

Advocating for Children Looked After (CLA)

Stella Smith

Kerry-Ann Rawson

Outline

An understanding of the perspectives of Children Looked After and how their identity development impacts their ability to thrive and develop. The role of the professional and language used when supporting Children Looked After as well as policy and practice is reviewed to understand the best possible practice required to support Children Looked After. Changing the lens of how we see Children Looked After

Keywords

Provision for Children Looked After, Professional development, vision for change

Stella Smith and **Kerry-Ann Rawson** are both experienced senior lecturers at NTU and are passionate advocates for Children Looked After.

NTU empowers students to achieve their aspirations and unlock their full potential through endorsement and advocacy within community partnerships. It recognises the importance of the individual identity of Children Looked After and ensuring societal reforms to reflect the needs of Children Looked After.

NTU Nottingham Trent University

NTU Nottingham Trent University

Who we are:

Kerry-Ann Rawson and Stella Smith are Childhood Senior Lecturers at NTU and advocates for Children Looked After (CLA). We believe in the importance of promoting positive identities for Children Looked After in both the social and educational sectors.

What needs to change?:

- Professionals supporting CLA should be commended for their hard work and dedication to supporting them.
- Professionals recognise and respond to children's needs and promote their best possible outcomes.
- However, it is not always easy to understand the impact of our work with CLA and we often forget to see the world through the child's eyes.
- It is important for professionals and policymakers to not only consider the perspectives of the children they support but also understand the impact the language, labels and behaviour they display can have on the CLA's future outcomes.

How policy and practice need to change:

Review the role of the professional when supporting Children Looked After. All professionals to be highly trained and knowledgeable on the physical and emotional needs of Children Looked After.

Wider reforms within the children's sector with a deeper emphasis on Children Looked After and care leavers. Policy and legislation to be reflective and inclusive of all children with more in-depth care and attention paid to the physical, emotional and educational needs of Children Looked After and care leavers.

Changing the societal landscape and associated language/terminology for Children Looked After. All language should be reflective and consistent among policy, professionals and practice. Language and terminology associated with Children Looked After must not fuel stigma and negative connotations to a child's care status and identity.

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Advocating for Children Looked After — Promoting Positive Identities in Professional Practice. A Speechmark Book. Stella Smith and Kerry-Ann Rawson

Supporting Grieving Children and Young People in Schools

AnnaLise Gordon

Emma Marfleet

Outline

The UK Commission on Bereavement Report (2022) – Bereavement is everyone's business – recommended the inclusion of death in the curriculum, a meaningful bereavement policy in every school, and appropriate training for adults working with children and young people.

A few key facts highlight the importance of the issue: One in 29 children aged 5-16 experiences the death of a parent; 90% of teachers receive no training in bereavement; little curriculum time is given to discussions about death, grief and loss. The impact of bereavement is acute in areas of disadvantage with significant educational and social consequences.

Keywords

Bereavement policy, curriculum, teacher training

Professor Anna Lise Gordon, Co-Director of the Centre for Wellbeing, St Mary's University

Emma Marfleet, mother of three bereaved children, Founder of The Marfleet Foundation

St Mary's University's Centre for Wellbeing in Education advocates bereavement awareness and expertise in education through its research, training, and collaboration across childhood bereavement networks. The loss of a loved one is a universal human experience, and specific bereavement training, curriculum and policy initiatives are essential in all educational settings.

CENTRE FOR WELLBEING IN EDUCATION

The Marfleet Foundation
Supporting Grieving Children In Schools

St Mary's University Twickenham London

Supporting grieving children and young people in schools

Professor Anna Lise Gordon
Centre for Wellbeing in Education

1 in 29 children aged 5-16 experiences the death of a parent

One child is bereaved of a parent every **22 mins** in the UK

90% of teachers receive no training in bereavement

The UK Commission on Bereavement Report (2022) – Bereavement is Everyone's Business – recommended the inclusion of death in the curriculum, a meaningful bereavement policy in every school, and appropriate training for adults working with children and young people.

Find out more about research, policy and practice on bereavement in education at St Mary's University here

Policy

- A school's bereavement policy should be a living and pro-active document, flexible to respond to different scenarios
- Compassionate school leaders and governors lead the way in a school's bereavement policy and practice, aligned with school's values
- 'Lost voices' (including disadvantaged children and young people and those with additional needs) must be heard as part of policy and practice development

RECOMMENDATION

Every school setting should have a bereavement policy with links, for example, to available resources and support, planning for each grieving child, training for teachers and a clear communication strategy.

Curriculum

- Importance of age-appropriate focus on death, grief and bereavement across the primary and secondary national curriculum
- Use of clear, consistent and unambiguous language to engage in thoughtful conversations about death, dying and loss
  - With an intentional focus on bereavement in the curriculum, there is potential to banish the taboo around death and dying in society

RECOMMENDATION

Death, grief and loss to be integrated across the primary and secondary national curriculum, as discussed at Westminster Hall Debate on Children and Bereavement, 2nd December 2024: hansard. parliament.uk/Commons/2024-12-02/debates/D6EA537F-836A-4969-AF94-D13AB34F1ADC/ChildrenAndBereavement

Training

- Clear research-informed evidence shows that bereavement awareness training builds confidence in early career teachers as part of Initial Teacher Education provision: www.bera.ac.uk/publication/grief-matters
- Bereavement is an 'all staff' issue; professional development empowers teachers and other adults in schools to respond sensitively to grieving children and young people
- A bereavement support network, hosted by DfE, would be beneficial for teachers and senior leaders coping with challenging bereavement situations

RECOMMENDATION

Promote provision of regular bereavement training opportunities for teachers and other adults working in schools, from Initial Teacher Education to NPQH qualifications.
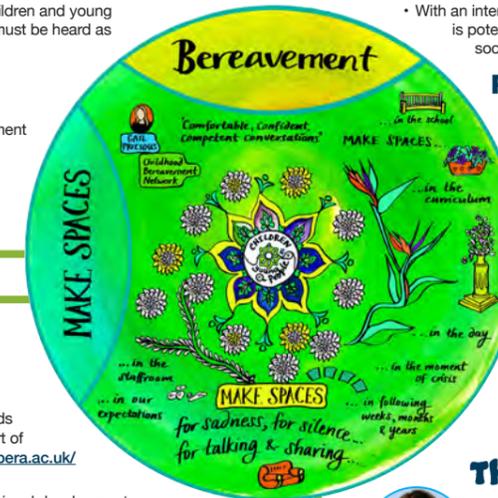
Stories of Love and Loss

The Marfleet Foundation

Emma Marfleet, primary school teacher, widow and mother of three school-aged children, and founder of The Marfleet Foundation

"Childhood bereavement is the sharp end of loss. I know that the effects of losing someone close can be life-changing. It is so important for children and young people to feel seen and empowered for who they are as they grieve and for their future selves."

More Than A Score

Jill Robinson

Alison Ali

Outline

The case against the current primary assessment system has never been stronger. School leaders, teachers and parents agree that SATs lead to narrowed curriculum, teaching to the test and unnecessary pressure on children and teachers. Reform is urgently needed.

Keywords

Primary assessment and SATs reform; evidence-based campaign; children's love of learning and wellbeing

Jill Robinson and **Alison Ali** Direct campaign strategy and communications for the More Than A Score Coalition.

More Than A Score is a Coalition of 60,000 school leaders, parents, teachers and education experts campaigning for reform of primary assessment. The case against the current primary assessment system has never been stronger. Reform is urgently needed.

more than a score

MORE THAN A SCORE

A coalition of educators, academics and over 50,000 parents campaigning to change the way primary-age children are assessed and primary schools are measured.

THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARENTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS WANT REFORM

PARENTS
77% OF PARENTS THINK SATs HARM CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH
Wellbeing, May 2024, 600 parents

TEACHERS
2/3 OF SECONDARY TEACHERS SAY SATs RESULTS ARE UNRELIABLE
Teacher Tapp, August 2024, 4,060 secondary teachers

HEADS
70% OF HEADTEACHERS THINK SATs SHOULD BE REMOVED
Teacher Tapp, October 2024, 986 primary school leaders

**UNITED CALL FOR CHANGE: SIGNED BY OVER 500 SCHOOL LEADERS PLUS EDUCATION EXPERTS**

SATs: A UNITED CALL FOR CHANGE from school leaders and experts

- Effective and substantial reform of SATs and primary school accountability
- Developed from an independent review, led by school leaders, teachers, parents and education experts
- Pause SATs in the meantime
- Put children's learning, wellbeing and achievements at the heart of assessment
- Hold schools to account in a fair, accurate and responsive way

THE PRIMARY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM TODAY

Statutory assessments take place in 4 out of 7 primary school years.

- **Reception Baseline Assessment** – before October half-term
- **Year 1 Phonics Screening Check** – summer term. Pupils who fail must resit the test in the summer term of year 2
- **Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check** – summer term
- **Year 6 Key Stage 2 SATs** – summer term

Inclusive Provision for SEND
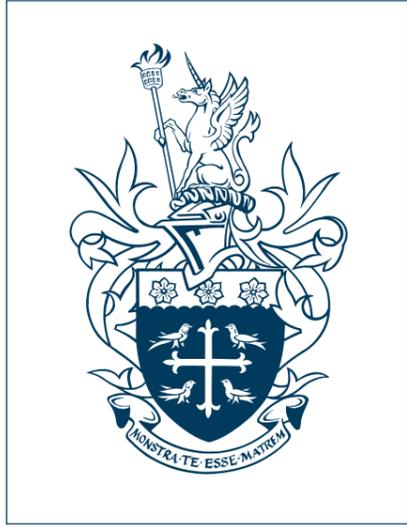
Clare Martin

Outline

Key areas for developing more inclusive special educational needs provision:
- teaching, curriculum, assessment
- ITT and workforce support/developments that might be needed/desirable for this to happen.

Clare Martin taught in mainstream and special schools for 30 years before moving into higher education. Her research interests are the influence of the inclusion of pupils with SEND on the teaching and learning of others, teachers' conceptualisations of SEND and inclusion and how teachers discriminate between SEND and underachievement. Policy assumptions that children develop in 'normal' ways place the emphasis on seeing educational difficulties as due to within-child factors and discourages reflection

on change in organisation, curricula and teaching approaches. There is friction with policy expectations that the curriculum is ambitious for all and that the teacher is responsible for the planning and progress of every child (*OFSTED, 2019*).

ITT programmes must rationalise the competing demands of addressing pupil diversity and raising outcomes within the culture of performativity that can create 'perverse incentives' (*Daniels, Thompson, & Tawell, 2019*) for schools not to meet the needs of children with SEND, resulting in exclusion from mainstream provision. A preoccupation with individualised responses deflects attention from pedagogies conducive to meeting the needs of all. *Daniels, H., Thompson, I., & Tawell, A. (2019).*

After Warnock: The Effects of Perverse Incentives in Policies in England for Students With Special Educational Needs. In. doi:10.3389/feduc.2019.00036 OFSTED. (2019). The Education Inspection Framework (190015). Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/801429/Education_inspection_framework.pdf

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St Mary's University Twickenham London School of Education

Dr Clare Martin
Senior Lecturer on MA programme (Inclusive Pedagogy and SEND pathways), Course Lead for SENCO NPQ

Seeing beyond the 'special' in SEND provision – because what's good for SEND is good for all.

Key Issues
- Narrowing of curriculum and teaching expectations.
- Increased marginalisation of learners with SEND
  - higher rates of exclusion
  - demand for additional/separate provision
- A focus on core academic attainment against standard expectations rather than relative progress & personal/social development.
- Limited focus on SEND within ITE.

Policy flaws
- Assumptions that children develop in 'normal' ways place the emphasis on seeing difficulties as due to within-child factors & discourage reflection on change in organisation, curricula and teaching approaches.
- Friction between curriculum expectations that are ambitious for all & that the teacher is responsible for the planning and progress of every child (OFSTED, 2019).
- ITT programmes must rationalise the competing demands of addressing pupil diversity & raising outcomes.
- Culture of performativity that can create 'perverse incentives' (Daniels et al. 2019) for schools not to meet the needs of children with SEND.

Contact information
Dr Clare Martin,
School of Education, St Mary's University, Twickenham, TW1 4SX
Email: Clare.Martin@stmarys.ac.uk

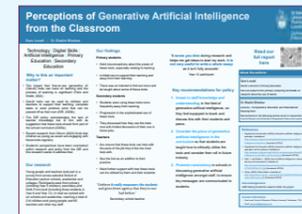### Policy recommendation 1
A curriculum for all rather than SEND being an 'bolt-on'.

Issues
- A move away from personalised learning to a focus on content delivery.
- Reduced access to mainstream content/skills for children with SEND.
- Lowered expectations
- Implication that a separate setting is needed to teach a separate curriculum.

Ways forward
- Broader curriculum built around purposes/attitudes/values as well as knowledge/skills.
- Reconstruction of curriculum expectations to reduce tensions between 'mainstream' and 'SEND'
- More 'bottom-up' approach to curriculum development and inclusive teaching.
- **SEND doesn't exist in a vacuum.** Design for the most vulnerable. Those without additional needs can thrive in that system too, unlike the other way round.

Policy recommendation 2
Aspire to flexibility rather than normative expectations & judgements.

Issues
- Emphasis is on the student adjusting to the school environment rather than the school adapting pedagogy and curriculum to respond to learner diversity.
- Words such as *ability, progress and potential* convey assumptions that every child has a pre-programmed, fixed and limited capacity to learn. (Hart 2004, p2)
- A preoccupation with individualised responses deflects attention from pedagogies conducive to meeting the needs of all.
- Over-reliance on high-stakes examinations which disadvantage certain pupils (not necessarily SEND), promotes a narrow version of academic 'success'
- The emphasis on raising attainment in schools has resulted in prioritising limited and restricted pedagogies that produce technical effects (Glazard & Thomas, 2024).

Ways forward
- Move away from the rigid age-related expectations which perpetuate a misleading assumption that all children do, and should, learn at the same pace.
- Extending what is 'ordinarily available'.

Policy recommendation 3
Position inclusive SEND practice at the core of initial teacher training.

Issues
- How to rationalise the competing demands of addressing the diversity of pupil populations and raising outcomes for all pupils, all within the performativity culture of a neo-liberal policy context. (Essex et al., 2021).
- The quasi-market in teacher education emphasises measurable classroom skills and craft performance. (Glazard & Thomas, 2024).
- Specific sessions/modules on SEND contribute to artificial distinctions and non-inclusive boundaries through promoting ideas of specific pedagogical knowledge/ skills.

Ways forward
- Promote intersectionality - weakening strongly classified categories of labels, curricula and pedagogy.
- Think not *special* education but teacher knowledge about SEND so they better apply common strategies and deepen their understanding of differentiation and adaptation.

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Board 3 | Children's Rights and Wellbeing in Secondary Education

Meg Moss

NCPS

Fiona Wilson

Emotionally Informed Learning

Hayley Sherwood

Lessons for Life Prep for Secondary
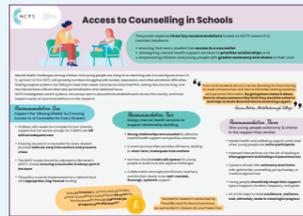
Rebecca Eynon and Louise Couceiro

Digital Equity in Secondary Education

Martin O'Sullivan and Ellen Collins

Mental Health

Hannah Copeland and Nicci Golland

Speakers of Other Languages in Secondary Education

Sam Lovatt and Shalini Bhokar

Perceptions of AI

Rebecca Simpson-Hargreaves and Jo Tregeza

UKLA

Lisa Panford

Decolonising MFL
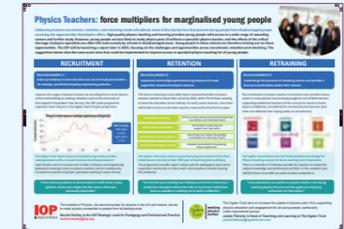
Rachel Hartley and Jackie Flaherty

Physics Teachers/Marginalised Young People

Dr Caroline Neuberg and Ally Davies

Maths Skills of Trainee Science Teachers

Children's Alliance Emotional Health Working Group Recommendations

Meg Moss

Kate Day

Outline

Our poster will address the issues that our working group of over 40 organisations have identified within children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, from the role that school nurses can play, to the importance of specialist interventions, and how educational establishments can better support them.

Keywords

Emotional-health, mental-health, wellbeing

Meg Moss is co-Chair of the Emotional Health Working Group, Head of Policy & Public Affairs at NCPS, and parent to two young children.

Kate Robillard-Day is co-Chair of the Emotional Health Working Group, a highly experienced and qualified psychotherapist, SEND practitioner, and trainer.

The Children's Alliance is a coalition of organisations amplifying best-practice, and calling for children and young people to be at the heart of policy making. We're calling for a broad range of evidence-based complementary initiatives to improve the emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people across the UK.

NATIONAL COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY SOCIETY

NCPS

Access to Counselling in Schools

This poster explores **three key recommendations** based on NCPS research & member feedback:

- ensuring that every student has **access to a counsellor**
- redesigning mental health support services to **prioritise relationships**, and
- empowering children and young people with **greater autonomy and choice** in their care

Mental health challenges among children and young people are rising at an alarming rate (current figures show 1 in 5, up from 1 in 9 in 2017), with growing numbers struggling with anxiety, depression, and other emotional difficulties. Existing support systems are failing to meet their needs: services are stretched thin, waiting lists are too long, and the interventions offered often lack personalisation and relational focus. NCPS investigated current systems via surveys sent to educational establishments across the country, and have based a series of recommendations on this research.

Recommendation One
Support the 'Missing Middle' by Ensuring Access to a Counsellor for Every Student

- Children with needs too complex for low-intensity support but not severe enough for CAMHS, are **left without adequate care**
- Ensuring access to a counsellor for every student provides **tailored, early interventions and prevents crises**
- The MHST model should be adjusted to Barnardo's MHST+ model, **ensuring a counsellor is always part of the team**
- This policy must be implemented at a national level with **appropriate, ring-fenced funding**

Recommendation Two
Design mental health services to support relationship building

- **Strong relationships are essential** for effective mental health support and positive outcomes
- Current services often prioritise efficiency, leading to **short-term, inadequate interventions**
- Services should **create safe spaces** for young people to build trust and explore challenges
- Collaboration amongst practitioners, teachers, and families means more **well-rounded, thorough, systemic** support

From what students tell us it can be daunting for them having to meet someone new and feel comfortable sharing sensitive and personal information. **By giving them choice it allows them to choose someone they think they would be suited to and helps to break down barriers to accessing support.**

- Emma Betiku, Middlesbrough College

Recommendation Three
Give young people autonomy & choice in the support they receive

- Mental health and wellbeing support works best when young people are **active participants**
- Imposed interventions run the risk of leading to **disengagement and feelings of powerlessness**
- Systems should offer **autonomy and choice** with options like counselling, group therapy, or creative approaches
- Young people **should help shape their support:** type of support, duration, frequency, and goals
- All of this helps to build **confidence, resilience, and, ultimately, leads to meaningful progress**

Every **£1 invested** in Primary and Secondary school Counselling could bring an **£8 return** for the Government through **improved job prospects and attendance*

*economic research conducted by Place2Be and Pro Bono Economics, as well as BACP, Citizens UK, and Public First

NCPS
NATIONAL COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY SOCIETY

Emotionally Informed Learning

Dr Fiona Wilson

Outline

The poster will present research from neuroscience, learning and emotions to demonstrate how emotionally informed learning is pivotal to foster positive learner identity, engagement and participation. The issues of long-term school avoidance, poor learner identity, and behaviour for learning will all be considered through a repositioning of emotions from being secondary to cognition, to being at the core of consciousness and a driving force in cognition. The poster will clearly outline how explicit consideration of emotions can transform learner identity and create positive learner identity and behaviours.

Keywords

Learner-identity, learner-engagement, learner-wellbeing

St Mary's University, Twickenham has been at the heart of education provision for over 170 years and continues to deliver outstanding research-informed initial teacher training. Neuroscience demonstrates that emotions are pivotal to, not secondary to, cognition. This reconsideration has considerable implications regarding the culture of emotions in education and beyond.

St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Emotionally Informed Learning Transforming Learner Identity

Dr Fiona Wilson

What is the current position?

Emotions are currently *othered* within education policies and practices whereby they are seen as something to be 'regulated' for learning to take place. This does not account for the position of emotions within consciousness (Damasio 2010, 2018, Michael 2020) where emotions are at the core of thought and behaviour.

There is a national crisis in relation to learner identity where school refusal is at an all-time high. One in five children remain persistently absent (Centre for Social Justice 2024). Many learners have a negative learner identity in relation to school and/or learning with life-wide and life-long implications (Wilson 2023).

The wellbeing of young people is in a critical state with support services overwhelmed and schools under-resourced to provide appropriate care (NHS Confederation 2024).

School exclusions resulting from behaviour issues predominately stem from emotionally informed behaviours or an emotionally informed negative learner identity (Wojecki 2007). Being excluded from school has a long-term consequences where those excluded are 12 times more likely to end up in prison (McCara and McVie 2016). Around 50% of those currently serving sentences in prison were excluded from school (Centre for Social Justice 2024).

The national culture relating to emotions has swung from one of suppression and denial to clinical (Attoe 2020). Neither are correct from a neuroscientific perspective, and both contribute to a negative culture relating to emotions within learning institutions and wider society.

What is emotionally informed learning?

What is the accurate role of emotions?

Contrary to the Cartesian understanding of emotions they are not secondary to thought. They are pre-reflective embodied experiences that create a somatic marker which informs a neural pathway which then informs thought, behaviour and identity (Damasio 2011, 2018, Narvaez 2011, Wilson 2023).

Emotions cannot be out-thought and have to be out-felt (Panksepp 2011). This is why will-power or behaviourist sanction-based interventions are often not enough to change behaviour. We can't think or will ourselves into transforming, we have to feel differently.

For identity to be transformed the original emotionally informed somatic marker must be out-felt or transformed. This is possible through the following:

- Embracing the possibility of a different outcome.
- Having a perception of control over what the new learner identity will be.
- Giving choices and playing with different possibilities to increase neuroplasticity and decrease fear.
- Meta-cognition and meta-emotion.
- Stretching homeostasis (comfort zone) rather than experiencing flight, flight or freeze.
- Being supported throughout the process by a cheerleader.
- Being courageous enough to feel emotions.

I feel therefore I am!

Policy Proposals

Proposal One
Guidance on learning is reconsidered to appropriately position emotions within consciousness and pre-cognition rather than as a separate entity that requires regulation.
Why?
This would enable emotions to be considered more effectively within the process of learning and learner identity.
Impact
Learner identity would be considered at the heart of learning facilitating robust, positive learner identities to support life-long and life-wide learning.

Proposal Two
The language being used in relation to emotions within education policies be reconsidered in accordance with neuroscientific research.
Why?
In order to challenge and change preconceived misunderstandings in relation to the position and role of emotions it is important to change the rhetoric from one of management to one of acceptance and nurture.
Impact
Institutional reconsideration of the labelling of emotions would contribute to an institutional culture change regarding the role of emotions.

Proposal Three
Schools are supported to develop an emotionally informed culture.
Why?
An emotionally informed culture would promote positive learner identities, emotional acceptance and comfort and learner autonomy.
Impact
A higher level of awareness about the role of emotions, the impact on learner identity, learning and wellbeing.

'You start everyday afresh. You present an opportunity for change' (Participant JS 2018)

Lessons4Life

Hayley Sherwood

John Rees

Outline

Lessons4Life has gathered evidence and data in a comprehensive whitepaper to encourage decision-makers to increase curriculum time for delivering valuable life skills-based lessons. Assessments are vital for identifying gaps and building on children's existing knowledge, ensuring they develop the skills needed for academic success and life.

By equipping pupils with essential life skills and supporting educators in delivering purposeful lessons, Lessons4Life advocates for a future where children are better prepared for secondary education, adulthood, and lifelong success. This evidence-based initiative calls for meaningful changes in policy to prioritise personal development in education and empower every pupil to thrive.

Keywords

Reducing Pupils Personal Development Gaps, Preparing Children for Secondary Education and Adult Life, Supporting Teachers to Deliver Education That Matters

Hayley Sherwood has 15 years of educational experience as head of alternative provision, creator of award-winning PSHE resources, and a committed school governor.

John Rees has over 40 years of educational experience as a secondary school deputy head and, more recently, a PSHE consultant supporting schools nationwide.

The **Lessons4Life** campaign highlights the need for decision-makers to equip schools with tools to address personal development gaps and empower them to evaluate, educate, and elevate children's growth.

Lessons4Life

Scan

Aim To equip children in England with the knowledge, life skills, and resilience to thrive and contribute positively to society, regardless of their background.

Recommendations

DfE Policy Changes

We recommend consolidating multiple policies into a single, cohesive policy to enable schools to simplify and effectively deliver personal development and life skills education with clear outcomes for children.

Introduction of Measurement Framework

We recommend the creation of a national measurement framework to identify gaps in children's personal development and life skills knowledge, enabling targeted interventions and quantifiable progress.

Attendance | Poor Mental Health | Cyber Risk & Crime | Knife Crime | Drug Misuse | Low Academic Attainment | Health Issues | Socioeconomic Challenges

21% | 20% | 23%

Comprehensive Training for Educators

We recommend investment in high-quality training programmes to ensure all educators and support staff are equipped to deliver personal development and life skills education effectively.

Committed Funding and Support

We recommend dedicated funding to provide schools with access to ongoing professional support and resources, ensuring the delivery of high-quality personal development and life skills education.

50,973 knife crime offences recorded in the 12 months to June 2024. An alarming 78% rise from 29,200 offences in 2014.

22.1% of 10-11 year-olds are obese according to recent public health reports. An increase from 19.1% in 2014.

53% rise in yearly referrals to young people's mental health services since 2019. 600+ emergency referrals a week.

up to 300K children could be missing out on education in England. A 200% increase from 94K in 2021/22.

25% of young people as of 2023 have tried vaping. The number of children using vapes has tripled since 2020.

50% of mental health problems are established by age 14. 10% of 5-16 year olds have a clinically diagnosable mental problem.

🌐 **www.lessons4life.org**   🌐 **@Lessons4lifeuk_**   ▶ **@Lessons4LifeUK**

Towards Equity-Focused EdTech: A Socio-Technical Approach

Professor Rebecca Eynon

Dr Louise Couceiro

Outline

We explore the relationships between technology and equity in secondary schools through ethnographic work and participatory stakeholder workshops. We demonstrate that the current technology offer for learning and teaching is not fit for purpose and often exacerbates rather than ameliorates educational inequities.

We propose that policy makers should work to place the current technologies offered to schools by the commercial sector under greater scrutiny. For example, how does the use of and access to EdTech vary across contexts and circumstances? What biases and pedagogical values do they promote? How might EdTech reconfigure social and pedagogical practices?

Keywords

Education-technology, AI, equity and social justice

Professor Rebecca Eynon's research focuses on learning and the internet, and the links between digital and social exclusion. She leads the EdTech Equity project (edtech.oii.ox.ac.uk).

Dr Louise Couceiro is a postdoctoral researcher on the EdTech Equity project (www.education.ox.ac.uk/person/louise-couceiro). Her research interests include digital literacies, feminist theories and creative methods.

The Department of Education, University of Oxford, offers world-class, critical research into current educational issues. The EdTech Equity Project, part of the ESRC's flagship Education Research Programme, explores how technologies can exacerbate rather than ameliorate educational inequities in secondary schools.

Towards equity-focused approaches to EdTech:
A socio-technical perspective

Professor Rebecca Eynon, Dr Louise Couceiro and Dr Laura Hakimi

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About the project

This 3-year project explores the relationships between equity, technology, and teaching and learning in secondary schools. We demonstrate that the current technology offer for learning and teaching is not fit for purpose and often exacerbates rather than ameliorates educational inequities. We propose that policy makers should work to place the current technologies offered to schools by the commercial sector under greater scrutiny.

Methodology

There are six current, extended ethnographies taking place across secondary schools in England. Multiple data collection methods create rich ethnographic data. A socio-technical approach seeks to capture the everyday realities of technology use within and beyond the classroom. For example, how does the use of and access to EdTech vary across contexts and circumstances, and what biases and pedagogical values does EdTech promote?

Emerging findings

Schools

- Disparities in (digital) infrastructure: Various disparities in school and digital infrastructures are apparent, such as differences between quality and types of available devices, connectivity, pandemic-prompted technology choices and levels of IT support.
- A problematic evidence base: The evidence base that schools may rely on to make decisions about edtech, e.g. which technologies to purchase, or the pedagogic values of certain technologies, is lacking.
- Policy challenges: There are various challenges (such as resourcing and expertise) that schools experience when it comes to edtech policy development and roll out.

Students

- Student agency vs control: There is a tension between the level of trust and control of students' digital behaviours.
- Student academic identities: Students can use technology to expand their skills and interests, develop their sense of self; but are subject to reductionist data tracking and visualisation, and feel pressure to develop their self-regulatory behaviours around technology.
- Supporting digital literacies: Despite a persistent narrative of the digital native, there are some apparent skills 'gaps' and uncertainty for schools around the digital literacies that will be necessary for the future.

Learning

- Learning and pedagogies: The role played by technologies within (and beyond) classrooms varies considerably across and (sometimes) within schools, according to resource constraints, teachers' agency and ideology.
- Distraction in the classroom: Technology can be a source of distraction in the classroom, particularly when it does not work as intended.
- Assessment tensions: There are tensions relating to the use of technology for summative assessment, and the availability of generative AI leads to complexity in defining and detecting digital malpractice.
- Targeted tech: Technology use for specific (groups of) students (e.g., EAL, SEND) can be both enabling of an inclusive classroom and constraining.

Teachers

- Teachers' time: Teachers' understandings and preferences for using tech are varied. Teacher training, support networks, and adequate resources are important to support tech use in the classroom.
- Teacher autonomy and expertise: Teachers' autonomy in deciding what technologies to use in their classrooms and how to use them vary significantly.

Recommendations

Open Educational Resources
- Reflecting actionable insights for all stakeholders
- Demanding more from EdTech companies
- Championing the voices of schools and communities.

Policy Insights

To create mechanisms through which policy makers and the wider education community can demand "better" EdTech from vendors, that fits with broader educational purposes and designed with an explicit focus on questions of equity.

To find ways to better support schools in making informed decisions about EdTech, via access to high quality evidence, support with procurement, and with recognition of the existing inequities and resource constraints in the school system.

To broaden the scope and increase the quality of evidence utilised in policy making around EdTech to encompass expertise beyond commercial sector (including practitioner experience).

Engagement and Impact

- Advisory board networks: Working with the wider communities of our advisory board, including DfE and SSAT.
- Stakeholder workshops: Building on emerging findings; Defining priorities; Giving voices to marginalised communities
- Emerging themes: Capturing the nuance of everyday realities in schooling and technology

Youth Wellbeing: Mental Health, Social Care, and Smartphones

Martin O'Sullivan

Ellen Collins

Outline

We wish to address the inconsistency of support to the most vulnerable students and their families, proposing the need for increased mental health support in schools, as well as providing a more consistent approach to social care.

Keywords

Mental-health, family support, social care

Martin O'Sullivan is the Headteacher of Turing House School, and **Ellen Collins** is the Deputy Headteacher and Safeguarding Lead.

Turing House is a Free School in Twickenham, established in 2015. We pride ourselves on our holistic approach to students' wellbeing and education. We are experiencing the urgent need for support in helping with the mental health and wellbeing of our students, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Turing House

Issue 1 — Youth Mental Health

- The NHS supported 700,000+ children with their mental health in 2023.
- 20.3% of 8-16-year-olds had a probable mental disorder.
- Eating disorders rose from 0.8% (2017) to 12.5% (2023).
- 60% of children have been unable to access mental health services due to high referral rejection rates.
- Over 2 million people are on waiting lists for NHS mental health support in England.
- 11% of 8-16-year-olds with mental health issues missed 15+ school days in one term.

POLICY PROPOSAL 1

All schools should be funded by the Government to employ an in-house, full-time counsellor.

Issue 2 — Inconsistent Social Care

In the 2023 BASW Annual Survey of Social Workers:
- 46% felt that excessive workload was their biggest pressure.
- 46.91% identified adequacy of staffing levels as one of the biggest challenges in their workplace.
- 67.49% identified cuts to local services as one of the biggest challenges facing the profession in the immediate future.
- 64.61% of respondents report not being able to complete all their work during their contracted hours

POLICY PROPOSAL 2

Local Children's Services should allocate a named social worker to clusters of local schools.

Issue 3 — Impact of Social Media on Teens

- The average child (5-15 years old) spends 5 hours, 24 minutes a day on social media.
- Effects of excessive social media include: stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, sleep deprivation, poor school progress, reduced social skills.
- Smartphones have rewired the child brain, reducing social interactions crucial for brain development.
- Increased social media use predicts lower life satisfaction.
- Almost three-quarters of teenagers between age 13 and 17 have encountered one or more potential harms online.

POLICY PROPOSAL 3

Government should fund school strategies to reduce the impact of smart phones on students' mental health and wellbeing.

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, 485 children were seriously harmed or killed due to neglect or abuse

Working in the state secondary education sector, we have witnessed a steady and alarming decline in the mental health and wellbeing of our young people over the past decade. At the same time, it has grown increasingly difficult to access support from local services.

Mental Health Issues

2017	2020	2023
3 children in every classroom	4 children in every classroom	5 children in every classroom

Language Education as Stabiliser

Hannah Copeland

Nicci Golland

Outline

Newly arrived teenage asylum seekers (14-16) need full time English language support provision instead of the current immersion in mainstream education without language support and consequent marginalisation from later academic and employment possibilities.

Keywords

Asylum seeking teenagers

Hannah Copeland and **Nicci Golland** are compassionate professionals and advocates for refugees and asylum seekers, dedicated to facilitating individuals to rebuild hope and opportunity through language education in new communities.

CREMCYA supports underserved children and young adults through research and education, aiming to improve marginalised lives and influence policies and practices.

Centre for Research into the Education of Marginalised Children & Young Adults

&

West London College

Hannah Copeland | Nicci Golland

Insights from English for Speakers of Other Languages practice and research

Research & Practice context

Education for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision for new, forcibly displaced adolescents (aged 14-16) arriving later in the UK education system

- Young people forcibly displaced from homes for reasons including war, conflict, trafficking, persecution) to the UK education system arrive with high academic & career aspirations
- current insufficient & inconsistent ESOL funding & training for providers [2], de-prioritisation of EAL learners in education policy
- inappropriate placement in mainstream secondary education of displaced young asylum seekers without English proficiency or support – negative impact on learning, progress, motivation, future employment outcomes.
- missing from education [1]
  - schools unprepared ; difficulty accessing meaningful further education places [2]
  - ESOL waiting lists; heavy reliance on limited charity sector support of late arrivals [2]
  - lack of structured, safe, appropriate education setting increases vulnerability to victimisation, trafficking and exploitation, particularly unaccompanied young people
  - dispersal policies
- lack of data on late arrivals & their educational outcomes at governmental and institutional level [1]
- intersectionality & reproduction of inequalities
- lack of language provision negatively impacts educational & social integration & future employment prospects [1, 2, 3]

Education: a right for all children (Article 28, United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child)

Key recommendations

- long-term view with multistakeholder, coordinated, intentional approach at national & local levels to reduce barriers to education access [1]
- fund and resource appropriate, short-term interim provision and monitoring and rolling enrolment [1,4,7]
- increase funded hours for specific, full-time English language education pathway for new arrivals aged 14-16 to fully develop English before entering mainstream secondary [7]
- ensure training for designated mental health leads in schools & colleges includes specific awareness of refugee & asylum seeking pupils [7]
- benefit and advance cross party efforts to tackle inequality through educational attainment [1,2] .

Positive outcomes of increased funding for appropriate, tailored, full-time ESOL:

- Global context & international comparison.
- Benefits outweigh costs by third year (Woolf Report 2024).
- Crucial "component of integration": social inclusion; living conditions; employment and welfare benefits; health (CIR).
- Improves educational outcomes, retention, attainment & integration
- increases job opportunities & probability of finding higher income employment, contribution through taxes, reduced costs related to housing & welfare support
- Long term reduces inequalities & increase social cohesion
- determinant of health : accessing and using health service; mental health benefits , reduced need for language assistance services

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Perceptions of Generative Artificial Intelligence from the Classroom

Sam Lovatt

Shalini Bhokar

Outline

The impact that free-to-use generative AI (GenAI) tools can have on learning and the process of learning is potentially significant (Felix and Webb, 2024). Although the notion of artificial intelligence has existed for some time and has been present in education, the release of free-to-use tools, such as ChatGPT, Copilot or Claude, has disrupted the education landscape. Recent research from Ofcom (2023) finds that children as young as seven are engaging with these tools regularly. However, the true extent of use of these tools in schools and for education purposes is unknown. Students' perspectives have been overlooked within research and policy from the DfE and this research seeks to address that.

St Mary's University
Twickenham
London

Keywords

Education, Technology, Digital Skills, AI, Primary, Secondary

Sam Lovatt Senior Lecturer in Primary Education. He is an expert in the primary computing and leads on research about the use of GenAI.

Dr Shalini Bhonkar Lecturer International Development and Comparative Education. She lectures on the MA programme and a researcher at CREMCYA.

St Mary's University, Twickenham has been at the heart of education provision for over 170 years and continues to deliver outstanding research-informed initial teacher training. Neuroscience demonstrates that emotions are pivotal to, not secondary to, cognition. This reconsideration has considerable implications regarding the culture of emotions in education and beyond.

Perceptions of Generative Artificial Intelligence from the Classroom

Sam Lovatt | Dr Shalini Bhonkar

Technology | Digital Skills | Artificial Intelligence | Primary Education | Secondary Education

Why is this an important matter?

- The impact that free-to-use generative AI (GenAI) tools can have on learning and the process of learning is significant (Felix and Webb, 2024).

- GenAI tools can be used by children and teachers to support their learning, complete tasks or even produce work that can be passed off as their own (DfE, 2023b).

- The DfE policy acknowledges the lack of teacher knowledge but is firm with its suggestion that these tools should form part of the school curriculum (2023a).

- Recent research from Ofcom (2023) finds that children as young as seven are engaging with these tools regularly.

- Students' perspectives have been overlooked within research and policy from the DfE and this research seeks to address that.

Our research

Young people and teachers took part in a survey from across selected School of Education partner schools, academies and colleges. Participants were from primary (including Year 5 children), secondary and Sixth Form level (including those students in Year 9 and Year 12). In total we worked with six schools and academies, reaching a total of 214 children and young people and 60 teachers and other key staff.

Our findings

Primary students

- Held misconceptions about the power of these tools, especially relating to hacking.
- Limited use to support their learning and away from their learning.

Secondary students

- There was an interest to find out more and be taught about some of these tools.
- Students were using these tools more frequently away from learning.
- Progression in the sophisticated use of these tools.
- They discussed how they use the tools now with limited discussion of their use in future jobs.

Teachers

- Are unsure that these tools can help with the parts of the job they'd like the most help with.
- See the tool as an addition to their practice.
- Want further support with how these tools can be utilised by them and their students.

'I believe it really empowers the students and gives them agency that they've not had before.'

Secondary school teacher

'It saves you time during research and helps me get ideas to start my work. It is not very useful to write a whole essay as it isn't fully accurate.'

Year 12 participant

Key recommendations for policy

1. *Invest in staff knowledge and understanding* in the field of generative artificial intelligence, so they feel equipped to teach and discuss this with their students and peers.

2. *Consider the place of generative artificial intelligence in the curriculum* so that students are taught how to ethically utilise the tools and consider their roll in future industry.

3. *Promote consistency* in schools in discussing generative artificial intelligence amongst staff, to ensure key messages are communicated to students.

St Mary's University Twickenham London
School of Education

Read our full report here

About the authors:

Sam Lovatt
Senior Lecturer in Primary Education.
He is an expert in the primary computing and leads on research about the use of GenAI

Dr Shalini Bhonkar
Lecturer - Comparative Education and International Development.
She lectures on the MA programme and is a researcher at Centre for Research into the Education of Marginalised Children and Young Adults

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Starting a New Chapter: Providing a Rich Reading Offer

Rebecca Simpson-Hargreaves

Jo Tregenza

Outline

The PIRLS 2021 study indicates global improvement in children's reading but reveals concerning trends for England. Compared to 2016, it shows a decline, with children expressing less enjoyment and confidence in reading, with only 29% of English pupils enjoying reading. In 2024, The National Literacy Trust has reported the percentage of children and young people who indicate they enjoy reading is at its lowest since its inception in 2005. Reading enjoyment levels have decreased by 8.8 percentage points over the past year alone. This raises critical questions about the causes and strategies needed to foster a love for reading and enhance literacy outcomes.

Keywords

Reading for Pleasure, Primary, Secondary

Rebecca Simpson-Hargreaves is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester. Her field of research is centred on children's literature and social justice.

Jo Tregenza is a Reader in Primary Education at the University of Sussex. Her field of research focuses on effective approaches to teaching reading.

The United Kingdom Literacy Association seeks to advance literacy education which enables all learners, regardless of background or context, to thrive as literate individuals. Reading for Pleasure is in steep decline. This is a concern for educational equity, as reading for enjoyment impacts on literacy achievement for all.

UKLA
UK LITERACY ASSOCIATION

Providing a rich reading offer

Reading for Pleasure is in steep decline. This is a concern for social justice, impacting on literacy achievement for all.

A Crisis in Reading

The PIRLS 2021 reveals concerning trends for England. Compared to 2016, it shows a decline, with children expressing less enjoyment and confidence in reading. Only 29% of English pupils enjoying reading.

A decline in attitude towards reading
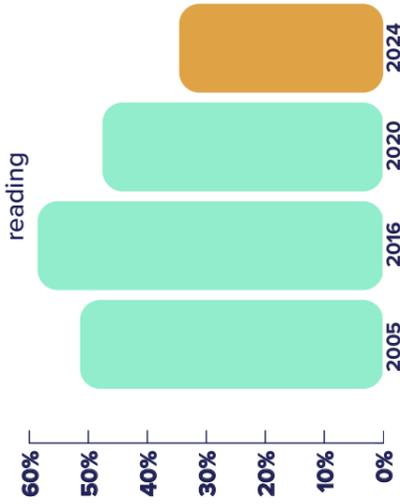
Percentage of 8 to 18 year olds who enjoyed reading in free time. *(Source: N.L.T)*

Impact of recent policy

47% of respondents to Teacher TAP survey said that England's Phonics Screening Check (PSC) led to teachers neglecting other curriculum areas either due to test practice or to time.

Stagnated results in reading post 2016 policy change
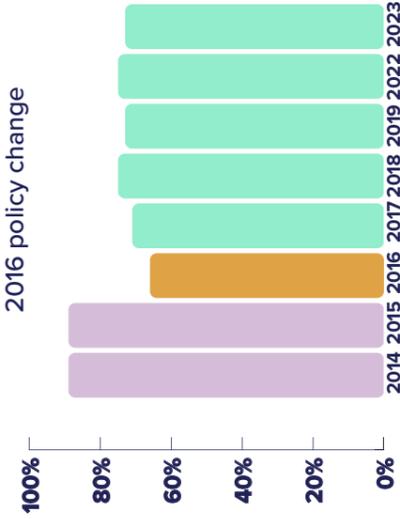
KS2 reading results since 2014 has showed no significant increase in results in those meeting the expected standard. *(Source: DFE)*

Policy recommendations

- **Reduce disadvantage gap** by giving RFP curriculum time and adequate funding for cpd.

- **Promote the importance of RFP** through ring-fenced funding.

- **Fund libraries,** library services and books in schools.

- **Fund research** to identify most effective pedagogy to develop critical and creative readers.

Actions for an Anti-Racist Secondary Languages Curriculum

Lisa Panford

Outline

Following the horrific scenes of racial violence over the summer, several involving young people of school age, we are reminded of the crucial role that secondary languages education must play in the fight against violent and interpersonal racism as well as the in the identification and elimination of institutional and structural racism.

Our SIG subscribes to the transformative potential of secondary languages education to enrich young people's lives by giving them a window to the world and in equipping them with the tools that promote dialogue, respect and peaceful futures. This poster will address the key policy recommendations from the SIG for advancements in anti-racist curriculum development for the secondary languages curriculum.

St Mary's University Twickenham London

Keywords

Secondary languages curriculum; representation; race equity

Lisa Panford is Associate Professor (St Mary's University) and Founder and Chair of the ALL.

Decolonising Secondary Languages Curriculum Special Interest Group is comprised of practising teachers, teacher educators, researchers and awarding body representatives. We are concerned with bringing attention to the issues of race and racism in Secondary languages education; Racial inequalities are a significant issue within Secondary schools and there are a complexity of subject disciplinary and pedagogical dimensions which require urgent intervention for positive practical impact on our students in our subject and activate meaningful long-term change.

Decolonising Secondary Languages Curriculum Special Interest Group (SIG)

Key words: secondary languages curriculum; representation; race equity; anti-racist pedagogies

The study of languages and cultures plays a critical role in equipping young people to see the realities that surround them and themselves in a global perspective. It is essential for social cohesion and for combatting racism. Our SIG operates under the auspices of our national professional subject association, The Association for Language Learning (ALL) and comprises practicing languages teachers, teacher educators, HEI academics, researchers and representatives from awarding bodies and educational publishers. We find that the following policy interventions are required in order for our subject to realise its potential.

Racially literate teaching workforce

Racial literacy should be a core element of teacher training and professional standards. There are persisting patterns of inequity in access, outcomes and experiences in our secondary schools for Black and Global Majority (BGM) pupils (House of Commons Library 2023) and in recruitment and retention of BGM teachers (Worth *et al.* 2022, Fig 1). However, there is sharp incongruence with the current Teachers' Standards and ITE/T curriculum (Initial Teacher Training and Early Careers Framework) in which there is no requirement for student teachers to be trained in racial literacy (Smith and Lander 2023). We support:

- **DfE's endorsement of the Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education/Training in England**
- **Revision to the Initial Teacher Training and Early Careers Framework and Ofsted Inspection ITE framework to include explicit reference to racism and how to be an anti-racist teacher.**
- **A targeted approach to subject specific racial literacy training which includes the recognition of systemic issues and biases unique to that subject and to allow for more nuanced understanding of how racism intersects with languages education** (Panford, 2024).

Fig 1. Ethnic representation of teachers by subject. Source: NFER analysis of School Workforce Census (Worth *et al.*, 2022).
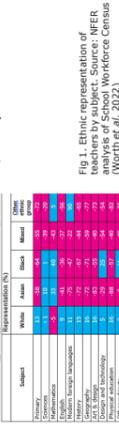
Anti-racist curriculum

A high-quality languages education should give learners access to the issues and complexities of our increasingly multiethnic, multilingual society. The revised GCSE subject content (DfE 2022) deviates from the National Curriculum's articulation of the purpose of studying a language as a 'liberation from insularity' (DfE 2013). The unrelenting focus on 'pillars of progression' (Ofsted 2021) delegitimise the role of critical and anti-racist work in our discipline (Cushing 2023; Smith & Lander 2023; Panford 2024).

- **Revision to the National Curriculum articulation of the purpose of study (Key Stage 3) and GCSE Subject Content to acknowledge the colonial legacies of the languages we teach and commitment to anti-racism through our discipline**
- **Revision to the prescribed vocabulary lists to include inclusive language with ensures that all young people with Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010) are represented and equipped to describe their perspectives and experiences of the world.**
- **Revision to the set texts and films (Key Stage 5) to ensure that students are introduced to narratives of BGM authors (Arday, 2021).**

SIG partnership with Pearson
Our series of resources: '*Permission to Speak: Amplifying Marginalised Voices Through Languages*' has been downloaded over 37k times

Access the complete series here:

Inclusive assessment system

The most recent school census, carried out by the DfE, recorded 20 per cent of pupils whose first language is known or believed to be other than English (DfE 2024). The British Council Languages Trends Report (2024) found that most state secondary schools support pupils to take examinations in so-called 'Home, Heritage and Community Languages' (HHCL). While studies show that young people who are educated in their own language perform better academically, currently only 19 languages GCSEs are available in England: Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Italian, Japanese, Modern Hebrew, Panjabi, Persian Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu. Of note there are no indigenous African languages included on this list.

- **We require a more expansive list of accredited languages.**

Find out more about our SIG through our webpage or email info@ALL-languages.org.uk

Access our webpage here:

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Lisa Panford is Associate Professor & Course Lead (PGCE Secondary Languages), St Mary's University and Associate Fellow, Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies, School of Advanced Studies, University of London. She is the Founder of the ALL Decolonising Secondary Languages SIG.

Physics Teaching – A Force Multiplier for Marginalised Young People

Rachel Hartley

Jackie Flaherty

Outline

Physics teacher recruitment, retention and retraining are essential to tackle inequity in physics education and benefit the lives of marginalised young people. High quality physics teaching and learning provides access to a wide range of rewarding careers and further study. Many young people from marginalised groups in the UK are missing out on the opportunities that physics offers. Children are less like to study physics post-16 without a physics specialist teacher, as is the case most often in disadvantaged areas. We call on the government to invest in physics teaching, including addressing the root causes for teachers leaving the profession.

Keywords

Inequity in physics education, Physics teacher recruitment, retention and retraining, Physics offers opportunities for marginalised young people

Rachel Hartley is the IOP Strategic Lead for Pedagogy and Professional Practice.

Jackie Flaherty is Head of Teaching and Learning at The Ogden Trust.

The Institute of Physics, the learned society for physics in the UK and Ireland, strives to make physics accessible to people from all backgrounds.

The Ogden Trust aims to increase the uptake of physics post-16 by supporting physics education and engagement for all young people, particularly under-represented groups.

Key Issue Addressing teacher recruitment, retention, and retraining needs will remove many barriers that prevent young people from marginalised groups accessing the opportunities that physics offers.

IOP Institute of Physics

The **Ogden Trust** | making physics matter

Physics Teachers: force multipliers for marginalised young people

Addressing teacher recruitment, retention, and retraining needs will address some of the key barriers that prevent young people from disadvantaged groups accessing the opportunities that physics offers. High-quality physics teaching and learning provides young people with access to a wide range of rewarding careers and further study. However, young people are less likely to study physics post-16 without a specialist physics teacher, and the effects of the critical shortage of physics specialists are often felt most acutely by schools in disadvantaged areas. Young people in these schools are therefore missing out on these opportunities. The IOP will be launching a report later in 2025, focusing on the challenges and opportunities across recruitment, retention and retraining. The suggestions below describe some quick wins that could be implemented to improve access to specialist physics teaching for all young people.

RECRUITMENT

Recommendation 1:
Scale up initiatives to diversify where we recruit for physics teachers, for example, specifically targeting engineering graduates.

Improve the supply of physics teachers by recruiting from a more diverse cohort and building on existing initiatives such as the University of Birmingham's Foundation Year Bursary, the DfE's pilot programme Engineers Teach Physics or the Ogden Teach Physics programme.
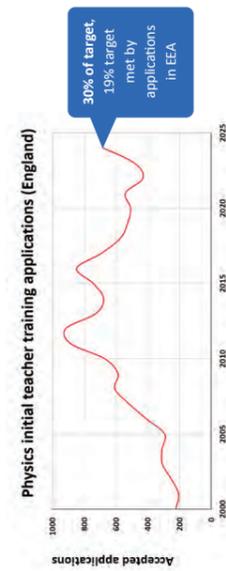
The Ogden Trust Teach Physics Internship programme provides undergraduates with a 5-week intensive teaching placement. Teach Physics aims to increase the number of physics and engineering graduates choosing to train as physics teachers and to consequently increase the number of physics specialists teaching in state schools.

"From teaching students to conversations in staff rooms, I have gained a whole new insight into this career, which was previously impossible."

Physics initial teacher training applications (England)

30% of target, 19% target met by applications in IEA

RETENTION

Recommendation 2:
Implement mentorship/supervision programmes and create supportive networks for physics teachers.

The Science Teaching Survey 2023 report revealed that 30% of physics teachers wanted to leave their school by 2025, with 17% of these wanting to leave the education sector entirely. For early career teachers, more than half (53%) of science and maths teachers leave within the first five years.

- Pre-teacher training
- Initial teacher education
- Early career teacher year 1-2
- Early career teacher year 2.5

- Online sessions delivering Subject Knowledge Foundations for Teaching Physics
- IOP Scholar mentoring and support over two years
- Mentoring and Subject Knowledge Foundations for Teaching Physics
- Bespoke mentoring for Developing Physics Specialism

The Ogden Trust Early Career programme supports teachers from their initial teacher training to their fifth year of teaching post qualifying. The programme provides expert subject specific pedagogical input and a supportive community at a time when many teachers consider leaving the profession.

"It is my first year teaching Year 13 physics and I don't know how I would have managed without the help of my mentor [which] has been so valuable in enabling me to teach confidently."

RETRAINING

Recommendation 3:
Turbocharge the provision of retraining courses and provide a bursary to participants and/or their schools.

The combination of physics teacher recruitment and retention issues results in many physics lessons being taught by out-of-field teachers; supporting established teachers of the sciences to retrain to teach physics confidently, is beneficial for the teachers and learners (and more cost effective than relying solely on recruitment).

ELECTRICITY | FORCES | ENERGY | ATOMIC PHYSICS | WAVES | MATTER & SPACE

The Ogden Trust delivers the DfE funded Subject Knowledge for Physics Teaching courses for those teaching out of specialism. There is a selection of modules available for teachers to build their subject knowledge and professional portfolio. In the academic year 2023/24 there were 608 successful module completions.

"I now absolutely see myself as a physics teacher. I am loving teaching physics this year and the pupils are loving my enthusiasm for the subject."

The Ogden Trust aims to increase the uptake of physics post-16 by supporting physics education and engagement for all young people, particularly under-represented groups.
Jackie Flaherty is Head of Teaching and Learning at The Ogden Trust
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The **Ogden Trust**

making physics matter

IOP Institute of Physics

The Institute of Physics, the learned society for physics in the UK and Ireland, strives to make physics accessible to people from all backgrounds.
Rachel Hartley is the IOP Strategic Lead for Pedagogy and Professional Practice
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Maths Skills and Confidence of Trainee Science Teachers

Dr Caroline Neuberg   **Ally Davies**

Outline

The proficiency of trainee science teachers in mathematical skills is crucial to teaching science in secondary schools especially given the increased mathematical content in the current GCSE science curriculum. In a recent study we found that only 13.5% of trainees (in a sample representing 10% of the 2023/2024 English cohort of science trainees) were confident and correct when undertaking a mathematical marking task. The study stresses the need to address the maths skills gap among trainee teachers and suggests the need for further research to determine the level of support serving science teachers require.

Keywords

Secondary Science, Mathematical skills, pre-service teacher development

Dr Caroline Neuberg is a Senior Lecturer in Secondary Education (Science) at Leeds Trinity University.

Ally Davies is a Science Subject Advisor at OCR.

Since 1966, **Leeds Trinity** has been shaping future educators through comprehensive teacher training programs, equipping them with the skills to impact their communities and the education sector. Trainee science teachers show insufficient confidence and competence in maths skills needed for GCSE science. Current support is inconsistent and limited during their training year.

Maths skills and confidence of trainee science teachers

Dr Caroline Neuberg, School of Education, Leeds Trinity University | Ally Davies, OCR | Dr Liz Nourshargh

What prompted us?

Maths content in science GCSEs has increased

Examiners' reports showed us that students find mathematical questions hard

Tearful trainee teachers told us they felt daunted at the prospect of teaching skills they hadn't mastered themselves

High demand for support we have offered with mathematical skills from *qualified* science teachers

We surveyed 18 tutors
about the maths content of their science courses for their 461* trainees

*21.5% of English science trainees 2023-2024

91% of trainees were on a course that did not include a science specific maths skill audit or assessment

Support provided for trainee science teachers is inconsistent across training providers.

We asked 156 science teacher trainees* to mark 8 maths-based GCSE science questions…

* 7.2% of science trainees in England, 2023-2024

Example question and answer
Q – 1 cm³ of water has a mass of 1 g. What's the mass of 1 cubic metre of water?
A – 1 cubic metre of water has a mass of 1000 kg

We found…

45% of trainees marked worse than if they had guessed randomly
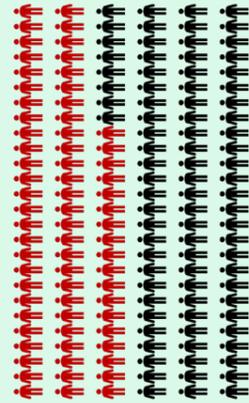
- 45% performed worse than chance
- 17% matched chance
- 38% did better than chance

83% made a mistake in their marking
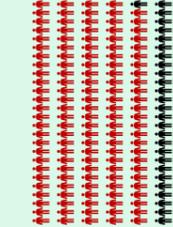
66% were confident even when their marking was wrong!
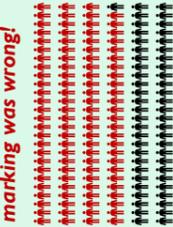
73% lacked confidence to mark a question
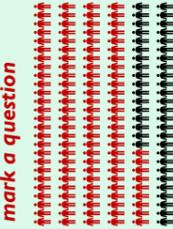
Our policy recommendations

Develop a free, sustainable system for trainees and teachers to audit their maths skills and get support

Integrate rigorous maths content and pedagogy in teacher training courses for science

Determine extent of maths skills gap for in-service science teachers

Board 4 | Further Education, Higher Education, Teacher Training and Retention

Jyles Robilard-Day and Kate Mahoney

Mental Health

Dan Whyte and Ruth McFarlane

Doing What Really Matters

Ben Webster and Paul Fean

Refugee Access to Higher Education

Helen Thouless and Viki Veale

Sustainable Primary ITE

Mary Nkune and Juliette Claro

Recruitment and Retention of International Trainees

Rod Campbell and Rachel Davies

Increasing International Physics Teachers
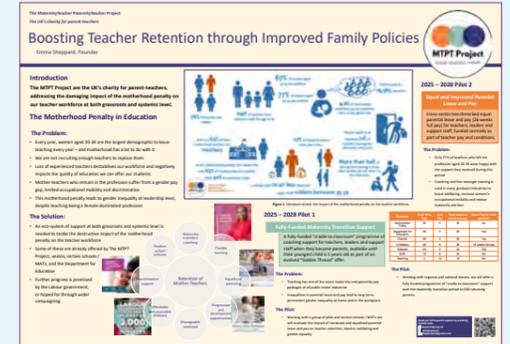
Emma Sheppard

Boosting Retention Through Family Policy
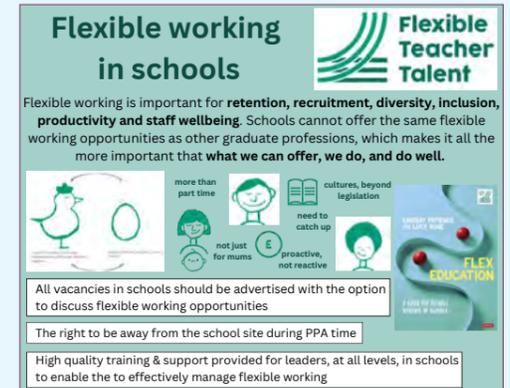
Lindsay Patience

Flexible Working in Schools

Access to Counselling in Schools

Jyles Robillard-Day

Kate Mahoney

Outline

Mental health issues in children and young people are increasing at a rapid rate, and the support they are currently receiving is inadequate in terms of what is being offered to them, as well as the time they spend on waiting lists. This poster will offer recommendations for those issues, calling for more consideration of mental health support roles in schools, facilitation of relational working, and greater autonomy for children and young people.

Keywords

Mental-health, resilience-building, missing-middle

Jyles Robillard-Day is CEO of the NCPS, and is passionate about improving children and young people's access to the right kind of support for them.

Kate Mahoney is Head of Training and Professional Standards at NCPS, as well as an accomplished and experienced counsellor of adults and young people.

The National Counselling & Psychotherapy Society (NCPS) is a leading professional body and Accredited Register for counsellors and psychotherapists with 18,000+ members across the UK. Counselling is a vital part of mental health support in education across the UK, yet best practice is not currently supported by policy in England.

Roles, Routes & Resources — A practical guide to wellbeing support for children & young people

Doing What Really Matters

Ruth McFarlane

Dan Whyte

Outline

We aim to increase accessible higher education opportunities for people in prison; facilitate learning communities of excellence; reduce the isolation of prison-based study; enable people with lived experience of prison to create and deliver solutions; influence the evidence base and advocate for prison education policy reform; provide holistic and relevant preparation for post-release employment; generate career-focused routes into meaningful futures.

Keywords

Higher education in prisons, reducing the isolation of prison based study, Learning Communities

Ruth McFarlane brings expertise in online and distance education and international good practice of college in prison programmes, and via the European Prison Education Association.

Dan Whyte achieved degrees while in prison and is now completing his PhD at Westminster University. He sits on four Employment Advisory Boards in prisons.

At DWRM, we are proud to be Doing What Really Matters, disrupting and innovating to revolutionise education in prison. Our mission is to forge accessible pathways into Further and Higher Education for students in prison, using education to prepare for active citizenship..

DWRM is a social enterprise led by people with direct personal experience of the Criminal Justice System.

Everything we do is about education in its broadest sense. Education enables us all to fully engage with the world around us and to be active and compassionate citizens.

Our Recommendations

1 Remove the 6 year rule eligibility limit for students in prison to get a student loan. This would enable people on long sentences to start studying at a higher level much earlier in their sentence.

2 Provide suitable Level 3 qualifications as standard in prisons to enable people to obtain the necessary entry requirements for higher level study.

3 Approve the use of the JStor academic library on the Virtual Campus, developed for use in prisons in the US.

Our Students Say:

Distance learning is a way to escape prison life; something to do in the quiet hours of the night behind the door. I handwrote my undergraduate assignments with very little support and certainly no fellow students to discuss my frustrations and challenges with.

A Learning Community is not about a geographical location, it is about opportunities for students to support and learn from each other.

About Us

Dan Whyte achieved degrees while in prison and is now completing his PhD at Westminster University. He sits on 4 Employment Advisory Boards in prisons and chairs the EAB at HMP Belmarsh. **Ruth McFarlane** brings expertise in online and distance education and international good practice of college in prison programmes, and via the European Prison Education Association.

At DWRM, we are proud to be Doing What Really Matters, disrupting and innovating to revolutionise education in prison. Our mission is to forge accessible pathways into Further and Higher Education for students in prison, using education to prepare for active citizenship.

Our **courses for people in prison**
We create accessible higher education opportunities for people in prison, facilitating learning communities of excellence which also reduce the isolation of prison-based study.

Our **employability programmes**
We provide holistic and relevant preparation for post-release employment and generate career-focused routes into meaningful futures.

Our **influencing and advocacy** work
We enable people with lived experience of prison to create and deliver solutions and we influence the evidence base and advocate for prison education policy reform.

DOING WHAT REALLY MATTERS

www.dwrm.org.uk   info@dwrm.org.uk   0800 987 5953

DWRM
DOING WHAT REALLY MATTERS

Closing the Gap in Refugee University Access

Ben Webster

Paul Fean

Outline

Only 7% of refugees access university, compared to a global enrolment rate of 42%. Refugee university access contributes to development goals, diversifies applicant pools for scholarship providers and creates a wealth of talent for businesses.

Keywords

Tertiary education, refugees, migration

Ben Webster is the founder of Mosaik Education. He has previously worked for the FCO, UKTI, and Transparency International.

Paul Fean is an experienced leader with 20 years of progressive technical and management roles in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and global programming.
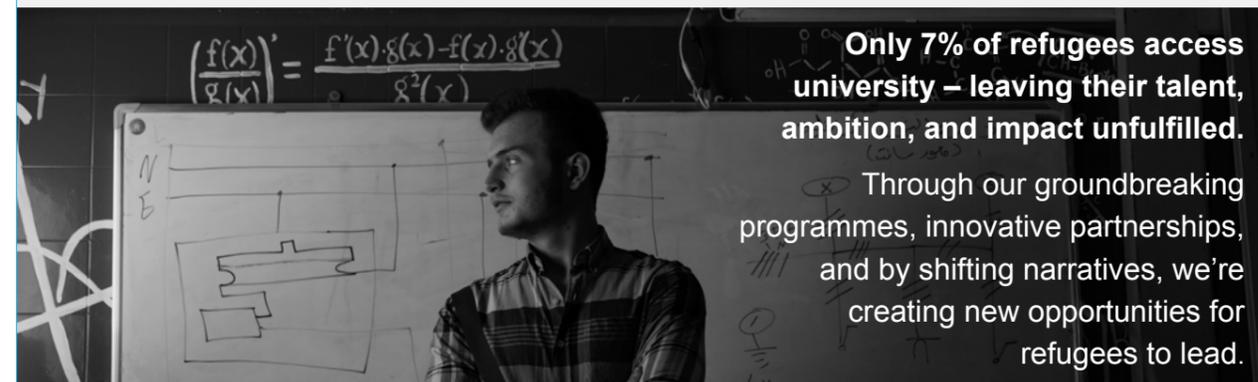
Mosaik Education's mission is to close the gap in university access for refugees, working across Jordan, Lebanon, Uganda, Egypt and Ukraine. THE KEY ISSUE: Only 7% of refugees access university, compared to a global enrolment rate of 42%. For refugees, access to higher education means self-sufficiency, leadership in the community, and contribution to hosting economies.

MOSAIK EDUCATION

Ben Webster | Dr Paul Fean

hello@mosak.ngo
www.mosaik.ngo

Only 7% of refugees access university – leaving their talent, ambition, and impact unfulfilled.

Through our groundbreaking programmes, innovative partnerships, and by shifting narratives, we're creating new opportunities for refugees to lead.

WHAT WE DO

Our **online guidance programmes** support refugees and displaced people to find and apply for funded university opportunities.

We use our expertise and networks to build **partnerships with universities** to create new scholarships and courses for refugees.

We build the evidence to **shift the narrative** towards highlighting the opportunities that come from investing in refugee university access.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

That the FCDO provides seed funding for a coordination mechanism to lead UK universities' global response to displacement and crises, catalyse funding, and generate learning and evidence.

Higher education (HE) is essential for post-conflict stabilisation and recovery. The Ukraine Twinning Project catalysed £50m from UK HE to support Ukraine. But the majority of overseas responses by UK universities lack coordination.

The UK has a world-leading Transnational Education sector: 600k students study UK degrees in 228 countries and territories. The expertise and business models are already in place to effectively deliver global HE to tackle shared challenges of our time.

UK leadership on this area can deliver a modern vision of aid that harnesses expertise of the UK's institutions and strong partnerships to address shared global challenges.

Scan to find out more about Mosaik

Scan to download Mosaik's *Responding To Global Crisis* Conference summary

Sustainable Teacher Education

Helen Thouless

Viki Veale

Outline

There are multiple pathways into teaching in England, but they do not all have the same results. One of the problems being that we spend money on training teachers but then they drop out of teaching. For example Teach First are 18 to 19 percentage points less likely to remain in teaching after their NQT year than teachers educated on different routes (*McLean and Worth, 2023*).

Helen Thouless and Viki Veale are both lecturers at St Mary's University, Twickenham.

St Mary's University trains over 200 teachers per year. We are concerned about the quality of teacher education across the multiple entry pathways and whether the weaker pathways lead teachers to drop-out of teaching.

Keywords

Initial Teacher Education; Retention of Teachers; Pathways to Teaching

St Mary's University Twickenham London

Sustainable Primary Teacher Education

St Mary's University Twickenham London

A highly skilled workforce is essential to the quality of the education system. There are multiple pathways into teaching in England. This ensures that all those who wish to become teachers are able to do so. Attrition rates vary across these pathways (McLean and Worth, 2023, see below).
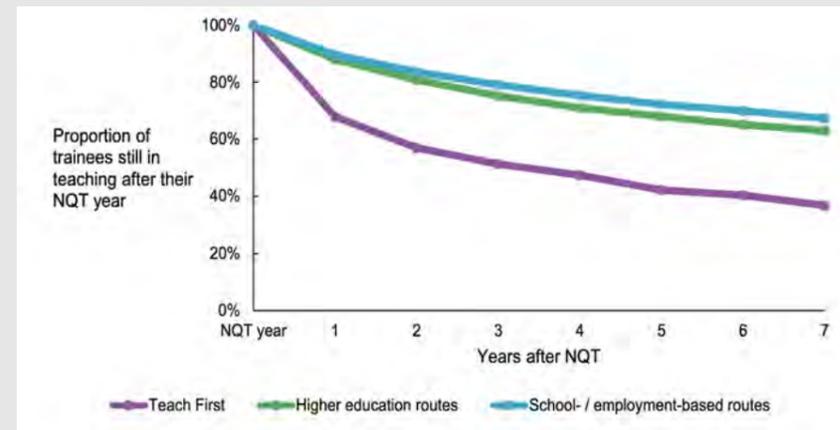
- Retaining teachers long enough to develop and share professional expertise can be seen as an issue which has moral, ethical, political and emotional dimensions (Veale, 2023).
- School centered teaching programmes have been criticised for lacking sufficient focus on learning theory and academic content (Brown, 2018). Many of these programmes have been developed within multi academy trusts with limited opportunities to explore practice outside the trust and develop criticality (Long and Danechi, 2023).
- Allen et al (2016) note that school-based initiatives place significant financial and personnel burden on the school. In order to promote sustainable Primary Teacher Education, we propose the following recommendations.

Prioritise university based undergraduate pathways into primary teaching	Provide a longer programme for post-graduate primary teaching routes	Revise the CCF to include a greater focus on child development and SEND

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Supporting International trainee teacher and early careers teachers in Education

Juliette Claro

Mary Nkune

Outline

With a growing number of international trainees coming to train to become teachers in England, teacher training providers have had to adapt practice in order to support the needs of the overseas trainees teachers who come with a wide range of expertise but also find it difficult to adjust to a new educational landscape. St Mary's University School of Education has developed an intensive and multilayered support programme to ensure they complete their course, qualify and most importantly thrive in Education settings in England.

Keywords

Initial Teacher Training for international teachers, Teacher recruitment and retention

St Mary's University's School of Education was graded Outstanding by Ofsted in 2024 and has a long standing reputation for excellence in Initial Teacher Education.

With 26% of international recruits mainly in science and Languages, Juliette Claro, Lecturer in Education for PGCE Languages with QTS and Mary Nknune, Head of Partnerships, together have over 45 years experience in Education as senior leaders and in teacher training.

Juliette Claro was an international trainee teacher herself and has designed the guidance for the support of international trainees from experience and through research informed practice.

Mary Nknune is safeguarding lead and has a extensive breadth of experience in supporting international trainees in our partner schools.

Teacher recruitment and retention of international trainees: a call for coherence in policies and practices

Juliette Claro FHEA NPQSL Lecturer in Education for PGCE Languages at St Mary's University Twickenham
Mary Nkune Head of Education Partnership at St Mary's University Twickenham

### Teacher recruitment and retention trends

'Teacher supply is in a critical state, which risks the quality of education that children and young people receive. Ambitious, radical and cost-effective policy actions to address teacher recruitment and retention are urgently needed.' (Worth 2024 p3)

On average teacher recruitment at Initial Teacher Training reaches half of its target year on year, teachers leaving rates increase year on year (NFER 2024) resulting in a crisis fulfilling teaching posts:
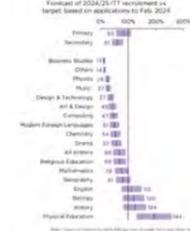
The case for international teacher recruitment

The Government incentives promoting bursaries for shortage scheme subjects resulted in an increase of international trainee teachers coming to England to gain Qualified Teacher Status in the United Kingdom with a particular increase in Science, Mathematics and Modern Foreign Languages filling the gaps in recruitment where Nationals with Languages or Science degrees choose alternative careers to teaching.
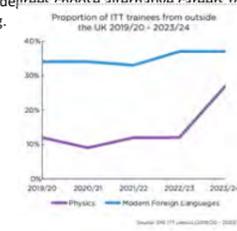
International trainee teachers bring their own expertise, skills and a breadth of knowledge to the profession, they also shine in resilience and adaptability facing the challenges of relocation to a new country and adapting their teaching skills to new curricula or pedagogical approaches.
They also face challenges that can be addressed through a more coherent and cohesive approach from policy makers to support our highly skilled and highly motivated international trainee teachers to thrive in their training and stay in education in England.
In 2024 -2025, 26% of St Mary's University Postgraduate General Certificate of Education candidates in Secondary are international candidates coming mainly from Europe, and West Africa for Modern Foreign Languages, and Physics. The data align with National data on the same year (DfE ITT applications for courses 2024-2025)

International trainee exit survey July 2024 St Mary's University.

Opportunities for all

International trainee teachers:
- Bring new expertise to their subject specialism
- Engage and inspire young people through their experiences and cultural capital
- Driving force for decolonising the curriculum and showcase British Values on a day- to -day basis in the classroom
- Inspire with resilience and adaptability
- Ensure sustainability in teacher recruitment in key subject areas.
- Serve as role models for young people (UNESCO 2023)

Challenges

International trainee teachers face extreme challenges during their training affecting their progression and retention on the course :

- Navigating settlement in England without appropriate relocation packages
- Precarity and cost of living in England
- Isolation and loneliness
- Adjusting to new systems, curricula, exam specifications, accountability measures and pedagogical approaches
- Adjusting to different approaches to behaviour management and safeguarding
- Unconscious Bias and micro-aggression from students and staff on school placement resulting in lower completion rate in Black, Asian, and Global Majority student teachers (Lander & Smith 2023)
- Linguistic adjustments (accents, academic writing)
- Difficulty in securing a job as Early Career Teachers as schools shy away from sponsorship and visa fees.

St Mary's University International trainee teachers of Physics and Modern Foreign Languages from West Africa and Europe

Our support for integration of international trainee teachers:

To support our international trainee teachers in their PGCE courses, universities and ITE providers collaborate to address the changes in recruitment. St Mary's University has developed an international student expert body to support from admission stage to graduation, and early careers integration. The expert body offers:
- pre-course module to introduce education systems, curricula, and framework for education in England.
- Support with visas, administration and settlement
- Support with hardship: food bank, second-hand clothes for school, household needs
- Support with academic writing, elocution, IT skills
- Support with well-being and mental health
- Support with micro-aggression and unconscious bias via our support network and training package for partner schools
- School based mentor and leaders training, support page and booklets
- Visas and sponsoring training for schools for future employment

Recommendations

To support the integration and development of the growing numbers of international trainee teachers coming to join the teaching profession in England we would invite policy makers to explore:

1. **Coherence in policies in recruitment from the Department for Education and immigration laws and quotas. Waiving visa requirements for trainee teachers and early career teachers in shortage. This** would reduce administration and cost burden for candidates, Initial Teacher Training providers and schools trying to recruit teachers.

2. **Revisit relocation packages to reduce precarity and support with the cost of living in the UK.**

3. **Explore best practice from UNESCO Education 2030 and other countries who have developed robust international teacher recruitment such as New Zealand who offer relocation packages**, and curriculum adjustment programmes before training starts reducing burden for schools and providers.

Contact

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Mary Nkune
St Mary's University
Mary.nkune@stmarys.ac.uk

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9. Australia teacher recruitment packages Teaching Jobs in Australia | Apply as a Teacher in Australia | Emigrate to Australia
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An Increasing Demographic of International Physics Teachers: Challenges and Opportunities

Rob Campbell

Rachel Davies

Outline

The recent expansion of the international bursary to include international applicants for Physics teacher education courses has resulted in exponential increase in applications for Initial Teacher Education courses. However, an increase in applications since 2022 has had limited impact on the chronic shortage of physics teachers in England. To support Government achieve their target of 6,500 additional teachers, policy in recruiting and retaining international physicists requires review. This poster Identifies the current challenges for the market and suggests strategic and achievable solutions.

Keywords

Initial teacher education, physics teaching, teacher recruitment

The Government have an ambitious target to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers. Recruiting internationally opens avenues to a wider market of succesful physics teachers, however, further work is required to maximise recruitment and retention.

Rob Campbell is course lead for the PGCE science at St Mary's. His research interests include how an increasingly diverse community of preservice teachers informs his practice as a teacher educator.

Rachel Davies is Director of Biology Education at Kings College London. She has over 15 years experience teaching in schools across London.

St Mary's University is recently rated Daily Mail's top University to study Education in the UK.

Kings College London is a world leading research University with an established reputation of expertise in education research.

An increasing demographic of international physics teachers. Challenges and opportunities

Robert Campbell FHEA Senior Lecturer and Course lead for PGCE Science at St Mary's University Twickenham
Rachel Davies Director of Biology Education Kings College London

Physics Teacher recruitment trends

- The teacher workforce model (TFM) shows that the number of new physics teachers needed dwarfs other STEM subjects.

Teacher workforce model ITT recruitment targets

(Figure 1 The recruitment target for STEM and MFL taken from DfE, 2024a)

- Expanding the bursary to international students increased the number of physics experts entering the teaching profession.
- Chemistry and Physics recruitment has failed to meet targets year on year.

Entrants to become a secondary science teacher against target.

Figure 2. A graph showing the recruitment in biology, chemistry and physics QTS courses against target from 2019-2025. (DfE 2024)

Latest recruitment statistics

- Increases in international recruitment mask some of the challenges of recruiting home students.

Percentage of PGCE cohort who are international

Figure 3 The percentage of each PGCE cohort, which is international.

These changes to the demographic of physics teachers entering the workforce in England mean that:

- Schools need to be familiar with the skilled worker visa process.
- Schools need to have an employer license to employ international teachers
- Schools are excluding applications for international teachers for advertised vacancies (DfE, 2024b)

Supporting our international trainee physics teachers

International trainee teachers will need support to apply their previous classroom experience to an English context (Campbell,2025). Therefore, it is important to recognise that international trainees:

- Have prior classroom experience in their specialist science discipline.
- May need support understanding how the English curriculum is sequenced.

It can be advantageous to
- Understand the teaching experience international applicants have from their home country.
- Explain how their experience can be applied to the English education system.
One science-specific example might be to
- co-plan practical science lessons with expert practitioners as part of trainee teachers' school-based
- training.

Our support for international early career teachers

- Recent reviews of the Early Career Teacher induction programme (DfE 2024c) show that developing subject knowledge is often overlooked.

Figure 4. Data showing the percentage of ECTs that felt their expectations for ECT training were fully met (DfE, 2024c, p23)

- Existing guidance (Rushton et al. 2021) provides a toolkit for supporting Early Career Teachers that is equally applicable to international physics teachers.

Recommendations include:
- Building expertise in the use of practical work to support pupil comprehension.
- Ensure initial mentor meetings focus on subject-specific guidance.
- Complete joint lesson observations to understand how science teaching differs from other disciplines.

Reflexive Practice for teacher educators

Figure 5 Some physics trainee teachers on the 2024-25 course.

Our experience working with international trainees (Neuberg et al 2024) has prompted us to:
- Undertake research to identify best practice.
- Identify unconscious bias in our teaching.
- Celebrate the cultural capital an increasingly international cohort of trainee science teachers offers.
- Review how teacher educators model pedagogic practice used to teach challenging concepts in science (IOP, 2024).
- Challenge a reliance on a westernised view of education.

Policy Recommendations

To support the integration and development of the growing numbers of international trainee teachers coming to join the teaching profession in England, we would invite policymakers to:

1. Design and implement a nationally recognised cultural awareness training that can be delivered online, included as part of a conditional offer of DfE Apply applications and completed before commencing teacher training courses in England.

2. Undertake Government research beyond the 2019 STEMMFL research, including a meta-analysis of the uptake of QTS accreditation for international physics teachers and best practices for supporting preservice and early career physics teachers.

3. Develop and disseminate a guidance document for schools focused on the VISA sponsorship program for international teachers

We postulate that embedding these policy recommendations can support the Government reach their ambitious teacher recruitment targets.

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Missing Mothers: how can we address the impact of the motherhood penalty on our teacher workforce?

Emma Sheppard

Outline

Women aged 30-39 are the largest demographic to leave the teaching profession every year and for many, the incompatibility of motherhood and working in schools is pushing them to quit. Consequently, we lose our most experienced teachers, leaders and mentors, eroding the quality of teaching and learning for our students. Understanding and tackling the manifestations of the motherhood penalty in education are key to improving the overall health of our workforce and solving both the retention and recruitment crisis.

Keywords

Retention, maternity transition, gender equality

A former English Teacher, **Emma Sheppard** is the Founder of The MTPT Project and the UK's expert on the motherhood penalty in education.

The MTPT Project is the UK's charity for parent-teachers, supporting colleagues working in education as they become parents and balance their domestic and professional responsibilities. We work to improve working conditions for teachers, aiming to transform teaching into a sustainable career choice and tackling our current teacher retention and recruitment crisis.

The MaternityTeacher PaternityTeacher Project
The UK's charity for parent-teachers

Boosting Teacher Retention through Improved Family Policies

Emma Sheppard, Founder

Introduction

The MTPT Project are the UK's charity for parent-teachers, addressing the damaging impact of the motherhood penalty on our teacher workforce at both grassroots and systemic level.

The Motherhood Penalty in Education

The Problem:

- Every year, women aged 30-39 are the largest demographic to leave teaching every year – and motherhood has a lot to do with it
- We are not recruiting enough teachers to replace them
- Loss of experienced teachers destabilises our workforce and negatively impacts the quality of education we can offer our students
- Mother-teachers who remain in the profession suffer from a gender pay gap, limited occupational mobility and discrimination
- This motherhood penalty leads to gender inequality at leadership level, despite teaching being a female-dominated profession

The Solution:

- An eco-system of support at both grassroots and systemic level is needed to tackle the destructive impact of the motherhood penalty on the teacher workforce
- Some of these are already offered by The MTPT Project, unions, certain schools / MATs, and the Department for Education
- Further progress is promised by the Labour government, or hoped for through wider campaigning
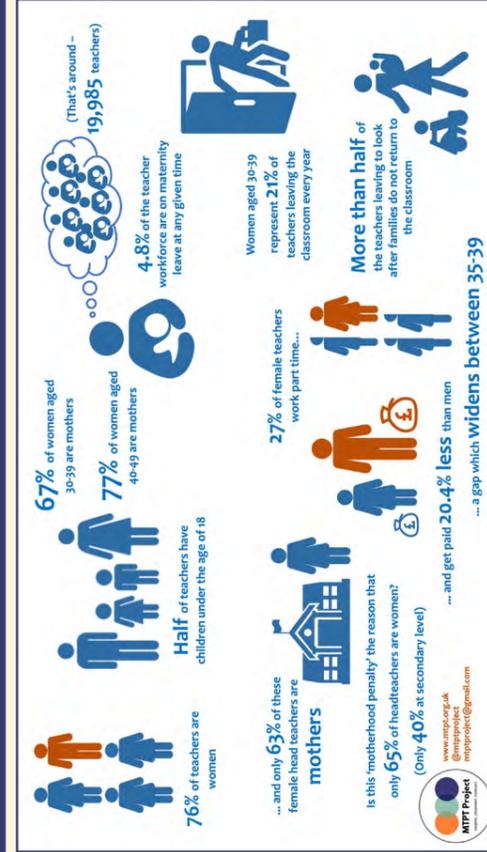

Figure 1. Literature review: the impact of the motherhood penalty on the teacher workforce.

2025 – 2028 Pilot 1

Fully-Funded Maternity Transition Support

A fully-funded "cradle to classroom" programme of coaching support for teachers, leaders and support staff when they become parents, available until their youngest child is 5 years old as part of an evolved "Golden Thread" offer.

The Problem:

- Teaching has one of the worst maternity and paternity pay packages of all public-sector industries
- Inequalities in parental leave and pay lead to long term, permanent gender inequality at home and in the workplace

The Pilot:

- Working with a group of pilot and control schools / MATs we will evaluate the impact of increased and equalised parental leave and pay on teacher retention, teacher wellbeing and gender equality

2025 – 2028 Pilot 2

Equal and Improved Parental Leave and Pay

Cross-sector benchmarked equal parental leave and pay (26 weeks full pay) for teachers, leaders and support staff, funded centrally as part of teacher pay and conditions.

The Problem:

- Only 27% of teachers who left the profession aged 30-39 were happy with the support they received during this period
- Coaching and line manager training is used in many graduate industries to boost wellbeing, increase women's occupational mobility and reduce maternity attrition

Employer:	Full 90% Pay	Half 90% Pay	Full weeks at enhanced pay	Total weeks at enhanced pay	Equal Pay for both parents?
Metropolitan Police	30	0	30		No
Department for Education	26	0	26		Yes
Deloitte	26	0	26		Yes
Linklaters	26	0	26		12 weeks full pay
Natwest	24	0	24		Yes
NHS	18	8	26		No
Teaching	4	12	18		No

The Pilot:

- Working with regional and national donors, we will offer a fully-funded programme of "cradle to classroom" support over the maternity transition period to 500 returning parents

Flexible Working in the Education Sector

Lindsay Patience

Lucy Rose

Outline

Flexible working in the education sector is an important area for retention, recruitment, diversity, inclusion, productivity and staff wellbeing. Schools cannot offer the same flexible working opportunities as other graduate professions, which makes it all the more important that what we can offer, we do and do well. Flexible working can take a number of forms in schools.

Teachers, support staff and school leaders may need to, or want to, work flexibly for many reasons. Schools who do not offer them the opportunity to do so will not be able to recruit, retain and develop a diverse, happy, sustainable workforce.

Keywords

Flexible working, retention, EDI

Lindsay Patience and **Lucy Rose** are co-founders of Flexible Teacher Talent and authors of 'Flex Education – A guide for flexible working in schools'.

Flexible Teacher Talent promotes flexible working in the education sector. We work with MATs, schools, individuals and the wider sector. Schools need to be open to, and better at, managing flexible working in order to recruit, retain and develop a diverse, productive and sustainable workforce.

Flexible Teacher Talent

Flexible working in schools

Flexible working is important for **retention, recruitment, diversity, inclusion, productivity and staff wellbeing.** Schools cannot offer the same flexible working opportunities as other graduate professions, which makes it all the more important that **what we can offer, we do, and do well.**

All vacancies in schools should be advertised with the option to discuss flexible working opportunities

The right to be away from the school site during PPA time

High quality training & support provided for leaders, at all levels, in schools to enable the to effectively manage flexible working