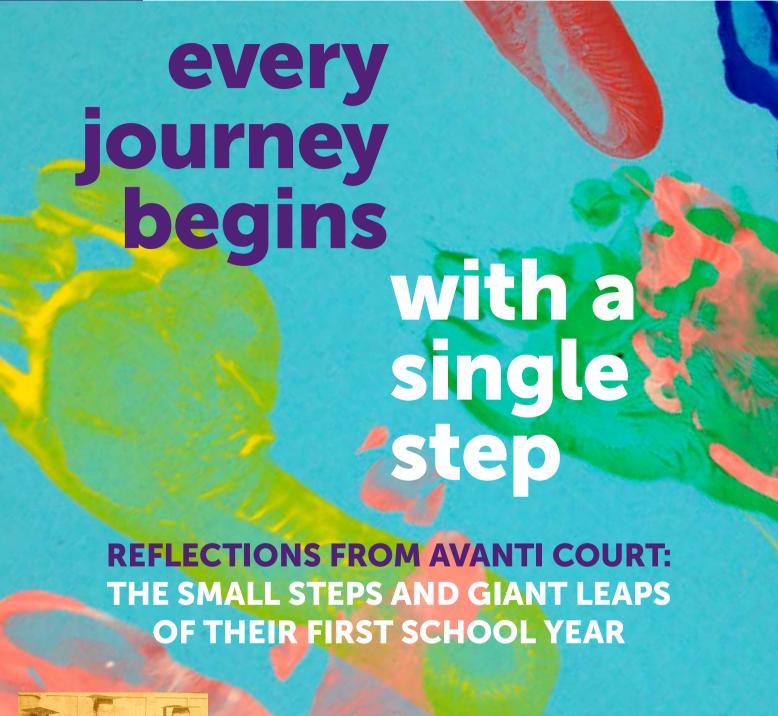


AVANTILIFE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AVANTI SCHOOLS TRUST





ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

HEADTEACHERS – WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT FROM THEM?
KRISHNA AVANTI'S GOT TALENT
OFSTED'S FIRST VISIT TO KRISHNA AVANTI LEICESTER
ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE EFFORT INVOLVED

What is **Avanti Schools Trust?**

We are a family of state-funded schools that draw on the teachings of Krishna Chaitanya. Our schools promote three core ideals of educational excellence, character formation and spiritual insight. An inclusive approach to spirituality means that at all Avanti Schools, students of any faith or none are welcome.

The Trust work to support and assist schools in key areas such as: character and ethos, quality assurance, school improvement, curriculum, management and training. The Trust central office is located at the Krishna Avanti Primary School in Edgware.

From the Editor

Welcome to the last issue of Avanti Life for this academic year, returning at the beginning of September. As we're almost at the end of this year, it's natural for schools to be looking back on their accomplishments. Avanti Court Primary School has been particularly reflective - though by school, we mean community. Their motto of 'Everyone welcome – Everyone included' could not be more accurate, and you'll find this most evident in the reflections contributed by parents. Naturally, pupils have also been very vocal in expressing themselves. Asides from telling us exactly what they think of school, they have symbolised their progress on our front cover.

We were very happy to include an article by Gareth Jones, the principal of Avanti House School. His study of school leadership also touches on the idea of reflection – another crucial quality required of a Headteacher if they are to fully appreciate the needs of a school and fully utilise the abilities of their staff team.

Looking back on the year is a vital practice for all of us; not just for the feel-good nostaligia factor but for the direction it provides in shaping our futures. We hope the successes of our schools inspire you for the year ahead.

Matthew Whitlock - Editor

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Avanti Court pupils footpainting to symbolise their journey of learning PUBLISHED HALF-TERMLY BY
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KRISHNA AVANTI'S GOT

In May, Krishna Avanti Primary School in Harrow held its second annual talent contest; an event that positvely touched both audience and participants. Deputy Head Shriti Pandya provides more detail.

Last year's contest took place during the day and on a much smaller scale. Since then, *many* pupils have asked for the competition to be held again. As a school it's important that we celebrate the many talents of our pupils as they don't always have the opportunity to display them - especially to a large audience.

There were over 60 acts that auditioned. Some of these were group acts, so that's a huge response. After two rounds of auditions, we narrowed it down to 22 acts who would perform on the day. The chosen acts had two weeks to practice and three rehearsals were held in school.

At the conclusion of the event, trophies were presented to 1st, 2nd and 3rd places, judged for their overall performance. All other acts who performed also received a trophy, kindly donated by FOKAS – the parent group of the school. Everyone who auditioned but didn't reach the final received a certificate, so everyone's efforts were recognised and rewarded.

The impact of the event has been huge. Reserved children were suddenly full of life since having the opportunity to shine. As for Tegh, the winner of the show, the impact has been incredible. His class teacher is thrilled by the positive effect the contest has had on him. His peers see him differently, he tries harder in school and his overall behaviour is extremely positive.



Words from the winner

Hi! I am Tegh, the lucky winner of 'Krishna Avanti's Got Talent 2013'. Furthermore, for my act I sang a song by Charlie Brown called 'On my way'. In my words there were some great and worthy competitors such as Dia and her brother Rayan doing a Kathak and drum fusion. Another spectacular act was by Arya and Aryan Kumar dancing to Michael Jackson 'Smooth Criminal'.

I felt royal and proud of myself. Also I was thrilled to be the winner of such an important event. I would thank my wonderful Dad Billy for standing by my side, the judges for their support and Happy the caretaker. On that special day I felt I earned that respect and I proved that everybody has talent including myself.

I felt amazed to be in such a great school that has provided this terrific event for me and the other students of Krishna Avanti to experience. For the upcoming students of Krishna Avanti, we know you have a hidden talent and if you come to this school you will be able to prove that talent which we all know you have.



Words from a runner-up

Hi, I'm Arya – runner up of Krishna Avanti's Got Talent. As you know, me and my brother Aryan danced to the phenomenal song 'Smooth Criminal'. I would like to say a big thank you to my brilliant Aunt who choreographed our act and my Grandma for putting so much effort into our performance.



What kind of Headteacher do you want?

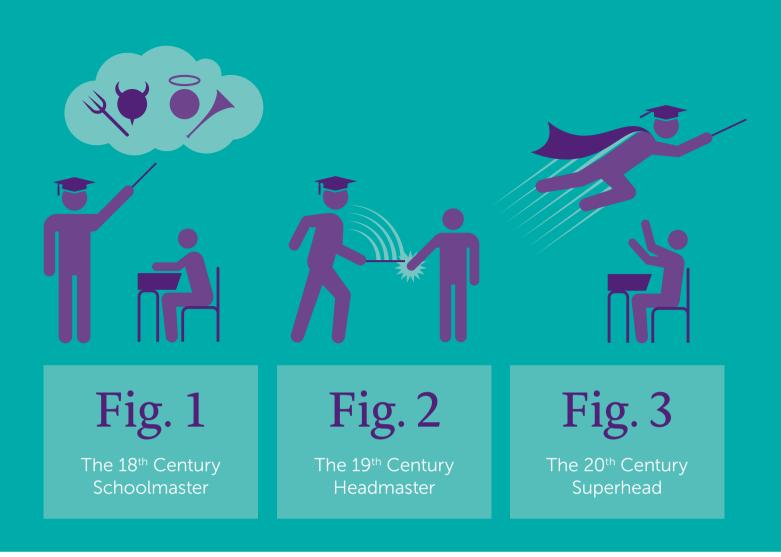
Written by Gareth Jones

UK Heads are the best in the developed world, an international research study concluded in March 2012. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which produced the report, praised Heads in this country for "doing what school Principals should be doing — spending time focused on learning, not administration".

However, barely a month seems to go by without banner headlines in the educational press regarding a crisis in the recruitment of Headteachers, predominantly in the primary phase but also in the secondary sector.

Various reasons are cited, usually accompanied by statistical evidence from the government's expert, Professor John Howson, formerly of Oxford Brookes University, who publishes an annual report on the labour market for senior staff in schools. Many reasons for these shortages are cited but most often:

- Retirement amongst the baby boomer generation
- The stresses of accountability some say to over 20 different groups; (teaching is the occupation with the third highest amount of work-related stress according to Health and Safety Executive figures.)
- Unreasonable parental demands
- Constant tinkering with the education and qualifications systems by successive governments
- The pressures of a negative OFSTED report which can result in job loss and has led to suicides amongst Headteachers
- The unwillingness of Deputy Headteachers and senior leaders to take on the ultimate role, deterred by all the above.



One response of governments has been to encourage recruitment by improving training for aspirant Headteachers via such programmes as NPQH – National Professional Qualification for Headship – and its follow-up – LPSH – the leadership programme for serving Heads, and the founding of a National

the founding of a National College for Leadership in Nottingham in 2000. Another has been to create a new role – Executive Headship – whereby one Head takes on two or even three schools with a senior deputy in each individual establishment. Critics of this

establishment. Critics of this policy, however, emphasise the short-termism of such an approach rather than addressing the fundamental issue – why is Headship no longer seen by most teachers as a valid and desirable career goal?

Much of this stress naturally

stems from the constant changes to our education system. Some look back fondly to Oliver Goldsmith's affectionate 18th century portrait of "The Village Schoolmaster" (fig. 1) who was "skilled to rule" and amazed the villagers "That one small head could carry all he knew". Roll

"Teaching is the occupation with the third highest amount of workrelated stress. Much of this stress naturally stems from the constant changes to our education system."

> forward a further 80 years and we have Mr Thomas Gradgrind, the notorious Headmaster in Dickens' Hard Times (fig. 2), demanding:

"Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts; nothing else will ever be of any service to them. Facts, we want nothing but Facts." (*Hard Times* – 1854)

A century on and in the 1980's and 1990's a new Headteacher role

was defined with the tag Superhead or Hero Head (fig. 3) suggesting that one person alone could turn around a failing school, but in fact only in rare cases did this produce significant and sustained impact.

What kind of leaders do we now demand in 2013? The funeral of Mrs Thatcher last month divided the nation as to whether she was heroine or villain, depending on your view of her time in office. Do we want leaders with a consensual approach or the likes of the current head of OFSTED, Sir

Michael Wilshaw, ex-Headteacher of Mossbourne Academy, who delights some with his bullish utterances while alienating many others?

"I have no time for Headteachers who go around moaning. They have to get on and do it" and

"If anyone says to you (as a Headteacher) that staff morale is at an all-time low, you know you are doing something right."

Ask parents, pupils, staff and governors what kind of Headteacher they want and you will get four very different, probably contradictory answers. Even the name 'Headteacher' seems to be going out of fashion, replaced by 'Principal', with the semantic nuance that teaching is not the key function.

Various educational leadership gurus, like John Westburnham and Michael Fullan, have sought to capture different styles of leadership from the didactic, top down model – coercive, authoritative and pace-setting styles – to the more collaborative – affiliative, democratic and coaching styles of leadership – with the emphasis on encouraging individuals to develop professionally and to sign up to a shared vision or set of goals which the team works towards achieving. The suggestion

"Would you really want Lord Sugar running your local school?!"

is that a good Headteacher will employ each of these styles depending on the situation she/he encounters.

Others suggest that schools are now big business and that education should look to industry for its template, encouraged by volumes such as Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and Jim Collins' book Good

to Great. The concept here is that schools should see themselves as a competitive business, analysing the needs and aspirations of their customer-parents and aggressively marketing a bespoke educational product to their target audience, refining their product as market conditions change. The current reputation of the financial sector

and the state of the British economy might suggest we look elsewhere! Would you really want Lord Sugar running your local school?!

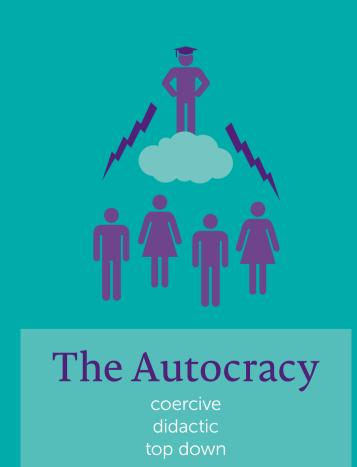
Currently, Headteachers have to play many roles, amongst which

might be deemed:

- Accountant
- Social worker
- Media guru / Spindoctor
- Charismatic Orator
- Architect / Planner
- Attendance Officer

How would you run a school?

Depending on the situation that she/he encounters, a good Headteacher will employ the leadership style that is appropriate. Here are a few of the approaches to running a school that are suggested by educational leadership gurus today.



- Data Analyst
- Lawyer
- Community Leader
- Recruitment Officer

Perhaps the last of these comes closest to what, in my view, is required in a modern Headteacher. It is totally unrealistic to expect a single individual to have strengths in all the above areas and so the ability to select a 'team of all the talents' is a key Headship quality, appointing individuals whose strengths complement not replicate those of the Headteacher.

What then of *this* baby boomer? After Headships in four schools, would it not be gracious to step down and let others take their turn? The fact is that the shortage noted above hits all schools, large or small, successful or faltering, primary, secondary and special. And, of course, this is the best job in the

world, developing young people and seeing them grow and flourish, academically, spiritually and in terms of character so why would one give up the chance to lead until one is pushed? Indeed, I was recently asked by a parent of a Reception youngster whether I would still be around to see his daughter graduate from Avanti House in 2026! We shall see.

So, any final words of advice for a would-be Headteacher? Five tips then on leadership:

- The needs of the child are paramount
- Only promise what you can deliver
- Develop a team which covers all bases
- Be reflective
- Accept that on occasions, albeit rare occasions, you may be wrong!

I leave the final word to one of America's greatest leaders:

"It is not the critic who counts, not the one who points out how the strong man stumbled or how the doer of deeds might have done them better

The credit belongs to the one who is in the arena; whose face is marred with sweat and dust and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause and who, if he fails, at least fails while bearing greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat." Theodore Roosevelt









The Democracy

encouraged shared vision affiliative

The Business

competition innovation parents as customers

Inspector Calls

Sally Hughes is Principal at Krishna Avanti Primary School in Leicester. She talks us through the nailbiting moments which follow that most disquieting of calls.



his year in May Krishna Avanti Primary School in Leicester received its first Ofsted inspection since it opened in 2011. The inspection lasted two days, conducted by one inspector.

This was my 8th Ofsted inspection since they first started in the late 1990s and my 5th as a Headteacher. Each time the bar is raised and expectations are higher. With each new Ofsted framework the process becomes increasingly rlgorous.

We received the telephone call shortly after mid-day on Monday 13th May, giving notice that it would take place the following morning. I had just enough time to have a meeting with the Chair of Governors, send the necessary paperwork to Ofsted and hold a meeting with the staff.

Ofsted wants to see how well the school is doing and and if there are any weaknesses. They also want to find out if the leaders and managers of the school know how well the school is doing.

Ofsted judges 4 areas: teaching and learning, behaviour and safety of the pupils (very important aspects within this category are school attendance and spiritual and moral development of the pupils). It judges attainment of pupils and leadership and management of the school.

Fortunately I had prepared a very concise but informative Self Evaluation Form of the school. even though this is no longer a requirement by Ofsted.

The inspector arrived at school by 8am on the first morning. After looking at initial safeguarding documentation we had a long initial discussion of 1½ hours about the school. Then we carried out two lesson observations together. The inspector asked me what my judgements were on the lessons before he would assess them. Fortunately we agreed.

Later in the day he watched me give verbal feedback to the two teachers. Then he observed six more lessons himself. He met with a group of six children to ask them questions about school. In the afternoon he held a meeting with the Chair of Governors. He also met with the Senior Leadership Team. Just before he left he gave me an Interim Judgement. He left school at six o'clock on this first day.

At 8am he came back for the second and final day of the inspection. He spent this first part of the day interviewing parents in the playground, as they were bringing their children to school. He attended daily worship and then carried out more lesson observations and book trawls. He held a meeting with the business manager questioning whether the school was good value for money.

At mid-day he had a second meeting with the Chair of Governors and myself. By 2.30pm he fed back his final judgements to myself, the Chair of Governors and the Senior Leadership Team.

I was reassured by the extremely rigorous Ofsted process that my judgements on the Self Evaluation Form had been very accurate. The outcome of the inspection that Krishna Avanti Primary School is securely 'Good' is a very pleasing place for us to be, as the school is only in its second year. We are now all driven to move the school to 'Outstanding'. Ofsted has told us clearly how this can be done and we know that we can do this!

"We received the telephone call shortly after mid-day on Monday 13th May, giving notice that the inspection would take place the following morning"





Anila

We first heard about the school when plans were in progress for its proposed opening. The idea of a school that would follow such a unique, forward-thinking and inclusive ethos appealed to us as parents. We keenly listened to Edward Anaboa and James Biddulph speak about plans for the school and their vision of how the four pillars would guide their teaching.

Of course all parents want to have the best for their children, and given that this school was to be brand new, we made a visit to Krishna Avanti Primary School in Harrow in order to give us something to compare the school to. This visit confirmed our feelings and we decided that Avanti Court would be our daughter's next school.

Our daughter settled well into the school's newly built building and well lit classrooms.

She has made great friends and has formed a good relationship with her class teacher Miss Mistry and other teachers and staff at the school. Raia will often skip into school and talk animatedly about the interactive and fun learning opportunities she has been given. She tells us "I love school... I love learning". Raia will speak about the activities she has participated in at school such as Yoga, meditation and also talk about the values of the school (courage and respect etc.) and give examples to demonstrate her understanding of them.

We have been delighted with our daughter's learning experience at Avanti Court Primary School and know that they will continue to grow and give children the same opportunities as they have given our daughter.

Dimple Pandya

Once we attended an open day for Avanti Court, we knew that we wanted our son to be a part of this new adventure and benefit from all it had to offer. We were overjoyed to learn that our application for this school was successful and that our son was going to be part of something amazing!

From the initial buzz of parents and children alike in the playground on the first day, to the warm welcome from Avanti Court staff and the fantastic Headteacher, this first year has been an exciting experience and an adventurous journey for us and our son.

The numerous school trips, the parent workshops, the level of engaging with parents by senior management, and a very happy son... these are some of the highlights of this past year for me as being part of the school. When having a fun interview scenario with my son and asking him what he likes best about his school, he answered "love my good friends

and I really like it when Mr Biddulph speaks to me when he sees me".

The culture and ethos of the school are effectively being embedded and I can see this only strengthening and shaping the future of our children at Avanti Court.

I consider myself to be very lucky and privileged to have had the opportunity to send my son to Avanti Court. We are now part of this amazing community and are at a big advantage as we have joined at the outset with a small school community. My hope is that parents, school staff and senior management continue to work together cohesively so that we can build a strong foundation for our children's future.

I strongly believe that all pupils attending this school will stand out as unique individuals with supreme qualities once they complete their journey of learning with Avanti Court.



A TEACHER REFLECTS

Amy Sivadasan

(Year 1 Teacher and Middle Leader)



Avanti Court - One year on...

The fate of Avanti Court well and truly drawn. Recipe for success shadowed by fear of the unknown... A perfect cocktail mix of apprehension, a pinch of perseverance, A sprinkle of hope, but a dash of confusion, A slice of excitement and a good spoonful of passion!

But always hope and prosperity to unify our radiant dreams. The seeds of our labour have fully dispersed. Our fruits have flourished and Avanti now on the map. Testing times ahead promising more blood, sweat and fatigue As the cries of inspection sets its dreary sights.

Yet we seek solace in Krishna who guides us through the testing boundaries.

Our vision is set and our hurdles are in sight. Trust inspection a success, Parent views scorching high, Borough moderation a triumphant breeze. Elated and contented parents an asset to the school, Delightful happy children praying for the day to never end!

Time to relax and collect our thoughts, Meditating and seeking karma. Silent sighs of joyful children, Happy birthday Avanti. Looking forward to another year of fun, festivities and fulfilment!



Children at Avanti Court have fun symbolising the year in a colourful and creative way but what do they say about their time at school?

"I like to be with the teachers in the school because they are kind" Diya – Shukla Class

> "I like school because it helps me learn how to write I enjoy it so much" Devanshi – Blanco Class

> > "School helps me learn my phonics" Aiden – Blanco Class

"I love coming to school because I like playing with my friends and I like taking away and maths" Kayan – Balta Class

"When I come to Avanti Court it makes me happy because I get to play with all my friends and because it makes me stronger and every time I learn I get courage!" Lewis – Shukla Class

"I like learning about phonics and my numbers and the little baby chicks" Nikita – Shukla Class

"Mr Biddulph sings lovely songs with us and we have lots of fun in Shukla Class" Anya – Shukla Class

"I want to play with my friends and my twin Lewis and I like to build castles and spaceships" Rudra – Shukla Class

"I like writing at school"

The courage of KOORICHH

Dravit Koorichh of Avanti Court reflects on his journey into teaching

What is your role at Avanti Court?

I am the school business manager. I joined to help start the school, and have loved every minute of it. There is more purpose in being a project manager where the assets are children's learning and lives and not just figures on a spreadsheet as in my previous jobs. And being around our Avanti Court children and having the opportunity to be involved in teaching and collective worship, the realisation that this is what I wanted to do – to teach – became more apparent – and my need to act upon these feelings more necessary.

Why did your journey change direction?

Most of my career has been in project management and commissioning for public services but there was a seed of doubt about whether this was right for me. I've always wanted to be in contact with people in the work I do but this didn't really satisfy me. I started exploring careers which matched my skills, my personality and my need to work with people. I volunteered at secondary schools, prior to my role at Avanti Court and was all set to become a secondary teacher in business and economics. But it still didn't feel quite right. But for some strange reason all the opportunities I had were taken away from me: GTP at a local secondary, a Schools Direct place and a PGCE. Krishna was clear - this was not right for me

I started at Avanti Court as business manager, sitting with the Headteacher in our local café, working out how to open up the school. I heard his passion for education at primary school and felt that this could be what I was looking for. He asked me some deep questions: "Do you want to teach subjects or the building blocks of good learning and good values; do you want to teach the same subject every day every week every year; do you want to teach a wide variety of subjects?" More and more it sounded that my nature – a generalist, jack of all trades, passionate about our values – would be more aligned with a primary setting. And so with this decision... interestingly, some doors began to open.

Why Schools Direct?

Schools Direct is a new scheme to train people to become teachers or those who want to change their career. The Wroxham Alliance & Teaching School is also inspirational – with a Headteacher who is well known nationally and when James suggested I explore this, the seeds of inspiration were sowed. I applied to the Alliance & Nottingham University and after a rigorous interview process I was given a place. So now, looking back on what I have contributed to Avanti Court as a business manager – setting up systems, learning to manage the complexity of school life, promoting the school – making it all happen, I now look to the future, to learn how to engage and inspire children to be the best they can be.

I am excited about the opportunity. This is what Avanti is all about – everyone is on their own journey of self-discovery. My new chapter is about to begin, with a Year 2 class, and I cant wait!

We are reviewing the situation...

The doors to Avanti Court opened in September 2012, and since that time the school has lived up to its promise that everyone is welcome and everyone is included — a promise they even make to school inspectors! Headteacher James Biddulph reflects on the past year and welcomes the year ahead.

A S GARETH JONES EXPRESSED in his article 'What kind of Headteacher do you want?' (see page 16–19), school leadership is now a very complex business requiring a diverse set of skills and reservoirs of hope and energy! Charles Dickens' commentary on society and education is well known and looking back at the life of Avanti Court in its first year, I remember one passage from Oliver Twist:

"The sun—the bright sun, that brings back, not light alone, but new life, and hope, and freshness to man—burst upon the crowded city in clear and radiant glory. Through costly-coloured glass and paper-mended window, through cathedral dome and rotten crevice, it shed its equal ray."

This year has been filled with 'new life' and 'bursts' of sunshine as we move towards our own 'glory'.

Exceeding Expectations

The glimmers of light and positive outcomes for our Avanti Court children are reflected in the two inspection visits conducted by the Trust and the Redbridge Local Authority. As Headteacher I am particularly pleased that John Myer and Maureen Hart (advisers at Redbridge) noticed very good improvements in the school: "The excellent way in which visitors to the school are welcomed, the school's ethos is evident"

"Standards are high with a significant number of pupils achieving above the expectation for their age"
"Reading and writing is very good and above expectations"

"Teachers know their children exceptionally well"

Happy Learners

Likewise the Trust commissioned a no-notice inspection to evaluate how far the school had developed in its short 6 month history. Their findings show that we have created a school community and not just a place where children come to school:

"Parents are very supportive of the ethos that underpins the work of the school and of the vision moving forward" "Pupils listen attentively... they are making very good progress in improving their focus when working independently"

"Very effective assessment tracking procedures enable school leaders to initiate pupil progress meetings"

Finally, and most importantly for me: "Children love coming to school and their behaviours show that they are very happy." Happy learners make good ones!!

So as Fagin said in the hit musical, "we have been reviewing the situation" and the situation is looking promising for the young people at Avanti Court, but also for their families and our community.



Tim Prendergast inspires pupils and teachers



Report by Luke Hindes (PE - Avanti House School)

n the 13th of May Avanti House had an inspirational visit from Paralympic athlete Tim Prendergast. Tim represented New Zealand at the Athens Paralympic games, winning a gold medal in the T13 800 metres contest.

Tim led the Avanti House students through the challenges he faced as an eight year old losing 95% of his vision. His story captured the emotions of the Year 7 students and teachers with the overall message being if you change from a negative to positive mindset and face challenges head on you can achieve any goal (or Gold!).

After the assembly Tim ran workshops with students on communication and team building games. Tim is an athlete mentor for the Sky Sports Living for Sports program which Avanti House students will be running over the summer term.

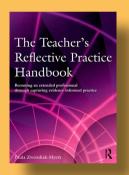




Reflective READING

Reflective Teachers are those teachers who stand back and consider what they do, how they do it, why they do it, and ultimately, the impact it is having on children.

Research in schools is about developing teachers to become increasingly reflective and support colleagues in developing a rich dialogue to support the development of all. These books provide a good guide to engage staff bodies in reflective practice - and coupled with the meditation and mindful books suggested in previous editions of Avanti Life, serve to improve education of everyone in schools – not only the children!



The Teacher's Reflective Practice Handbook:

Becoming an Extended Professional through Capturing Evidence-Informed **Practice**

By Paula Zwozdiak-Myers 2012, Routledge

What do we mean by reflective practice? How can it help you develop as a teacher? Helping you to translate pedagogical knowledge into practice, this Handbook guides you through studying your own teaching for personal development, evaluating your lessons through classroom research, and enhancing the quality of pupil learning.

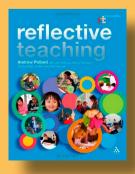


Reflective Teaching 3rd Edition:

Evidence-informed Professional Practice

By Andrew Pollard 2008, Continuum

Andrew Pollard is a leading voice on reflective teaching practice. This book, now in its 3rd edition, is a staple for any educators' diet to support their own professional development.



Ahead of the Class:

How an Inspiring Headmistress Gave Children Back Their Future

By Lady Marie Stubbs 2003, John Murray

A book by Lady Stubbs, Headteacher of St Georges School in London. The school, now successful, was one of the worst in the country with shockingly low attendance, poor attitudes to learning and a school with no heart or purpose. This honest book is an example of one Headteacher reflecting on her journey - a good summer read to inspire us all to continue in adversity!



EARLIER THIS YEAR, pupils of Avanti House School began a unit of creative writing. Lessons focussed on descriptive writing, making use of figurative language, with importance placed on becoming a conscious writer - thinking carefully about each word that graces ones page.

Students learnt how to use language devices such as similes, metaphors, personification and adjectives. They were also taught how to use a range of sentence structures and punctuation for increased effect.

For one particular task they were asked to create a story opening using the above named devices. Jakub did incredibly well, in result receiving a Level 6 (outstanding for Year 7) for his piece of work 'The Homecoming'. He already has people asking him for the next part of the story...



David stepped out of the gleaming black limousine; his chauffeur pulled down the window and asked "How long will vou take, sir?"

"Only ten minutes." David replied in a deep posh voice, while putting up his umbrella. "Ok sir." said David's chauffeur with relief on his tired face.

The rain was pouring down and the wind was moaning. David looked at the familiar path and door. He remembered all the things that happened to him here, like falling over and smashing his head on the curb or the time when he found a one hundred pound note in the gutter. That time he knew he was going to become rich... and he did!

David sighed and slowly walked up to the small, purple, ancient looking front door. The door had a big crack running down the centre, which was where he kicked it open ten years ago. Since then he hadn't set foot anywhere near that door. Up until now.

He was going to see his mother again. David had very little and maybe even no feelings towards this matter. He had conducted a very

David sighed and slowly walked up to the small, purple, ancient looking front door.

dull but successful company for the last eight years. He had learned not to feel compassion, pity or any feeling really to anyone except those who are dead. His lawyer had convinced him to come back to his mother to talk about his heritage as she had cancer and was going to die very soon.

David raised his hand slowly and knocked twice. No one answered. He was just about to knock again when the door swung open. Out of it peeped a small, grey haired woman. "Can I help you?" The woman asked. "Hello Mother." David whispered, licking his lips.

Upon hearing that, the woman's eyes widened with shock and panic...





The temple with a tale to tell

If you've ever visited the Krishna Avanti Primary School in Harrow, you would have marvelled at the white marble temple that graces the inner courtyard. Within the shrine, upon an intricately carved altar, you'll find gorgeously decorated deities of Krishna and His eternal brother Balarama. If that weren't enough of a visual treat, cast your eyes upwards, where the story continues.

Avanti schools share a special ethos, rooted in the teachings of Chaitanva. Over the centuries, these teachings have often been relayed by means of storytelling; the most popular of which tell us of Krishna's charmed childhood in Vrndavana, India.

Despite its impressive architecture and serene atmosphere, a visit to the school's temple may still leave one confused as to who Krishna is and why is he worshipped? The recently installed artworks,

commissioned by Nitesh Gor and created by local artist Emma V. Moore offer a colourful insight into the life and times of Krishna, and why his devotees find him so deliahtful.

On the following page you'll see the four murals, depicting a total of twelve much-loved scenes from Krishna's pastimes plus a concise outline of the story written by the artist. Find more of Emma's artwork here: behance.net/emmaymoore







A long time ago, in a faraway land...



Whirled Away

Wicked King Kamsa sent many demons to destroy Krishna, who he knew to be no ordinary boy. One of these appeared as a great whirlwind, lifting the baby boy into the air and carrying him far away from Vrindavan. Krishna held onto the neck of the whirlwind demon who fell like a stone to the ground and died.

The Company of Dear Friend

Under the shade of a beautiful banyan tree, Krishna sits with his brother Balarama and their friends, eating the delicious food prepared by their loving parents. The cows are happy in their pasture, and there's just enough time to enjoy the exchange of stories and jokes, especially those of the funny brahmin boy, Madhumangala.

Defeating Kaliya

The river Yamuna once turned black with poison because of the terrible, many-headed snake named Kaliya. Krishna danced on the heads of the snake, who quickly began to die. Fearing for the life of their husband, the wives of Kaliya prayed to Krishna to spare his life. Kaliya was banished far away from the land of Vrindavan, and the river became crystal clear once again.



Krishna Is No Ordinary Boy

Like all small children, little Krishna loves to put things in His mouth! One day, his mother caught him eating mud. As she looked into the mouth of her son, Mother Yashoda saw the whole universe. Realising that her son was the Supreme Lord, she fainted with surprise, but Krishna made her forget this and she awoke, remembering nothing.

Two Naughty Brothers

Krishna and His brother Balarama can't resist the delicious butter the gopis make and hang in pots from the ceiling. Because Krishna is only a small boy, he breaks the pots by throwing stones. Believing themselves unseen, He and Balarama eat the butter and feed it to the monkeys and crows.

Krishna Frees Two Heavenly Beings

When mother Yashoda catches Krishna stealing butter, she ties him to the wooden grinding mortar. Krishna cries a little, but then crawls out of the house, dragging the mortar along with Him. The grinding mortar gets stuck between two trees and as Krishna pulls, the trees fall down and two heavenly brothers, cursed long ago to become trees, are now freed.



Transcendental Dancers

In the secret, moonlit groves of Vrindavan, Krishna and the gopis (cowherd girls) perform the 'rasa' dance. Krishna moves swiftly between each gopi, who believes that she alone is Krishna's dance partner. The night is filled with the sound of ankle bells and the expert musical talent of the beautiful gopis.

Radha and Krishna

Radha is the most beloved gopi of Krishna. She is the most beautiful among the cowherd girls and knows well how to enchant Krishna with her expert singing and playing of musical instruments.

A Circle of Beloved Friends

Krishna loves to meet with his beloved Radha and her gopi friends. The gopis seen here are known as the 'astasakhis' (eight friends) and they are the most confidential associates of Radha and Krishna, assisting in the meeting and pastimes of the divine couple.



Coming Home

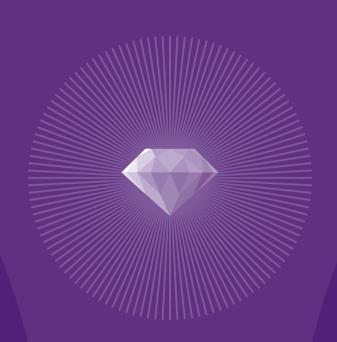
Krishna is a cowherd boy in the beautiful land of Vrindavan. Along with his friends the gopas (cowherd boys), Krishna takes the cows out to pasture every day and brings them back as the sun sets. At this time, Krishna's mother and father and his brother Balarama greet him with hearts full of joy.

A Terrible Fire!

In His wanderings through the forests of Vrindavan, Krishna once saw that a demon had created a terrible fire which was rapidly destroying everything in its path. In a majestic display of power, Krishna opened his mouth and breathed the fire into His own body, saving the lives of the forest's many animals and birds.

Throwing Colours

During the festival of Holi, Krishna and His friends like to throw coloured powders at the gopis. Never to be defeated in any transcendental game, the gopis throw colours back and the villagers look on with amazement at their beauty and playfulness.



The search for our centre



Dr. Graham M. Schweig takes us on a journey to the centre of the heart, taking guidance along the way from Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. For those on the path, he offers a reassuring revelation: as we move nearer towards our destination, our destination is also moving towards us.

The two major classical texts on Yoga, namely the Yoga Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, indicate that the attainment of enlightenment requires great effort and discipline.

The practitioner's exertion or effort or "intense discipline" (tapas) is a theme in the Sutras, and effort or striving (yatna) as necessary on the part of the practitioner for achievement of higher states of consciousness is a theme in the Gita. Most of the guidance in these two great works centers upon what we as practitioners should do, can practice, must avoid or engage, might perform, and so on. No doubt, there is much instruction on what we must do to strive for and achieve enlightenment in Yoga.

However, there is another side to enlightenment. It is a less known side, a more subtle or hidden side, a side that often goes unnoticed or that simply gets overlooked despite its dramatic expressions in the sacred texts on Yoga. It is the side of englightenment that is a gift, the side that is an offering from something much greater than ourselves. It is the side of *divine grace*.

In the Yoga workshops I offer, I often ask my students when introducing themselves to the group, "I know all of you have been doing Yoga. But how has Yoga been influencing you? How did Yoga enter your life? How did Yoga make itself known to you?" My query strongly suggests that Yoga is not just something that we do, but Yoga has a special power that does something to us. We have all experienced it in our own ways.

When we practice Yoga, a certain light of knowledge and devotion becomes ignited in us. In a general sense, this is englightenment. But the other side of enlightenment is the way in which the power of Yoga itself, a power independent of us, allows us to excel in greater levels of consciousness that formerly we could not even imagine. It is that power which, paradoxically, lifts us up into higher realms of achievement most effortlessly. The Gita tells us that this is the gift of the divine, Yogamaya, "the divine power of Yoga."

Enlightenment is not something that suddenly turns on one day. Rather it is something that we grow into more and more. Patanjali shows us that enlightenment is a developing thing in his exposition of the stages leading to *samadhi* and even within *samadhi* itself. Although *samadhi* is considered the perfection

Yoga, it too has many stages within its sabija phases, on the way to nirbija and dharmamegha-samadhi. From the very beginning of our practice, englightenment begins as the tiniest spark and moves into its blazing fires that contain both its divine gifts and extraordinary achievements.

Patanjali cleverly presents an idea of divine grace in one of his longer *sutra* texts. If one knows to look for it, one finds in his vision of divine grace a most profound presentation and, perhaps surprisingly, a metaphorical description of it as well. The idea of divine grace or a certain power of Yoga that favours and enhances our practice can be seen in the experience of *samapatti*, which, amazingly, is presented only once in the *Sutras* in the following:

When the turning has ceased, when that which is inborn shines forth like that of a jewel in the one who grasps [the meditator], in the grasping [the act of meditating] and in that which is to be grasped [the object of meditation], one stands so near that one attains a state in which a magic ointment has been absorbed—this is samapatti.

Yoga Sutras 1.41

What is being said in this *sutra* text? First, the turnings of consciousness that have been conditioned by the mind's impressions cease. Then that beloved divinity, *ishvara*, embedded within the consciousness of self,



The nitty gritty: confronting the conditioned mind and its deeply ingrained habits. Break these patterns and real meditation can begin.

Through sustained concentration and devotion, you have succesfully placed the object of your meditation at the centre of your conscious self.

Your efforts are rewarded. Now in the deepest of all meditative states, the once elusive object of meditation finally manifests, shining upon you.

shines forth like that of a jewel due to its pure turnings which are conducted within meditation, just as one turns a fine jewel to catch the light in its perfectly cut multiple facets. The

turnings of conditioned consciousness cease while the turnings of pure consciousness occur in meditation. When the meditator, the meditating.

samapatti: a grace that reciprocates the efforts, strivings, and achievements of the meditator in reaching the divine object.

and the meditated reach perfect harmony with one another, the meditator enters a meditative state in which he or she absorbs a magic or divine "ointment" that comes from the meditated. This ointment is a metaphor for divine grace. Thus samapatti entails a grace that reciprocates the efforts, strivings, and achievements of the meditator in reaching the divine object and in giving one's self fully to the divine.

This text defining samapatti utilizes two metaphors for describing its experience. The consciousness of the meditator is compared to a jewel that is so pure, so polished that it can shine forth due to its capacity to catch the light that shines down upon it. The implied element of light in the aphorism's first metaphor of the shining jewel is reinforced by the explicit and tangible substance of an ointment that is put forth in the second metaphor of the sutra text: that state of consciousness in the meditator that absorbs the ointment from the object on which he or she is meditating. This light, this

> ointment, which comes from a divine object in samapatti, powerfully expresses to the reader of the Sutra what the essential mechanics of divine grace in Yoga are.

It is known that Patanjali was himself an Ayurvedic physician and thus it is no surprise that he would draw imagery from that field to describe the ultimate state of Yoga. The application of this "ointment" (anjana) certainly draws imagery from Ayurvedic massage, in which the doctor applies the medicinal ointment to the body with the circular "turning" movements of the hands, with such massage strokes always moving in the direction of the patient's heart. In Yoga, when the turnings of consciousness are likewise turning in the direction of the spiritual heart, these are the unconditioned, pure turnings of consciousness that one discovers in the deepest meditative state of Yoga as samapatti.

It is important to note that Patanjali uses the word grahitr ("the one who grasps") for the meditator, the word

grahana ("the grasping") for meditating, and the word grahya ("that which is to be grasped") for the object upon which one meditates. These three components that are united in samapatti as subject, verb, and object of meditation, respectively, are all derivative from the Sanskrit verb root grah, which most literally means "to grasp." Naturally this verbal root is the same root from which one of the most commonly used words for "grace," namely anugraha, or that which "follows (anu-) the grasping (-graha)" of the divine, is derived.



As we are to "grasp" the divine in meditation, so now, in response, divinity "grasps" us in the form of divine grace. This is *anugraha*. We can observe *anugraha* or that grace which follows in response or in reciprocation to the yogi's strivings and efforts in the Bhagavad Gita. The following two verses illustrate the grasping of the yogi, as it were, and Krishna's response of divine grace:

However, for those who, having fully renounced all actions in me, are devoted to me

Through this yoga and by no other means; who, meditating on me, offer worship;

For them, I soon become the one who completely lifts them up from the ocean of the cycle of death,

O Partha, for their thought has been drawn to enter into me.

Bhagavad Gita 12.6-7

Here it is so eloquently stated by Krishna that for one who is a yogi, who is fully absorbed in and devoted to pure action and meditation, and with a pure heart, divinity quickly becomes the deliverer of such a soul from *samsara*, the endless "cycle of death." Indeed, the consciousness of such a yogi "has been drawn to enter" into the divine.

From this discussion, it is hoped that this special power of Yoga may be more appreciated. It is a power that we cannot control, it is a power that cannot be predicted. It is a gift, it is a grace, it is a cause of gratitude and reverential awe in a practitioner for whom this power has been efficacious and so moving. Thus it is in Yoga that we are to be united with something much larger, much greater than ourselves, something that contains the whole universe.

And when we become fully self-realized, fully self-aware, fully enlightened, as it were, we will traverse to the other side of enlightenment where we can now afford to lose ourselves completely in the selfless service of others' hearts fully. It will occur when we are dwelling in this state permanently, when we will experience special graces of the divinity within us, around us, and everywhere. There is no limit to the ways in which the divine can so sweetly and lovingly embrace us.

Dr. Graham M. Schweig earned his doctorate in comparative religion from Harvard University. He was a former Resident Fellow of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard. Graham was a Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies of Oxford University, has been invited to be a Visiting Fellow of Clare Hall at Cambridge University, and was formerly Visiting Associate Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Virginia.



Graham's teaching began as a Teaching Fellow at Harvard, and Lecturer at the University of North Carolina as well as Duke University. He is regularly consulted by dissertation committees as a reader or advisor for doctoral candidates around the world. He is presently Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies and Director of the Asian Studies Program at Christopher Newport University in Virginia.

Graham has contributed numerous pieces to encyclopedia volumes, journals, and books. Among his books are DANCE OF DIVINE LOVE, which was published by Princeton University Press (2005), and BHAGAVAD GITA: The Beloved Lord's Secret Love Song, which was published by Harper Collins Publishers (April 2007).



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