



IN THIS ISSUE

1 Welcome from Martin Smith

Reflects on advice to his younger self when he was a Head.

1 CODE Maths Hub Conference

2 Cultivating a Culture of Belonging for All

2 Engagement Report for 2024 - 2025 from The Maternity/Paternity Project (MPTP)

3 Interview with Nick Wakeling, Director of the Colyton Foundation

4 Three Things Schools can start doing about Oral Language with Devon Research School

5 Guidance from SchoolPro TLC on Increased Cyber-Attack Attempts on Staff Email Accounts

6 About Us and Keeping in Contact

6 – 7 Our Sponsors

Find out how our sponsors, Educating and Exeter Supply Partnership can support your School/Trust.



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Welcome from Martin Smith

Executive Director of SWIFT

Dear Colleagues

Happy New Year! I trust colleagues had a restful festive period.

In the days before and after the New Year there is the customary wave of advice on how to get the best from your New Year's Resolutions. I confess, I rarely engage with this tradition, but I can see why it makes sense to take stock, think ahead and plan for positive changes.

I was privileged to serve as a Headteacher for eight years. It was both the most rewarding and most challenging role I have ever undertaken. I suspect the job is even tougher today than when I left in 2016.

So, if I could go back to give some advice to my younger self when I was a Head, I think it would be to say something like:

"Commit to being kind to yourself..."

For example, remind yourself that you turn up each day committed to being the best leader you can be.

Celebrate and cherish the small and everyday things: a pupil turning a corner as a learner, a parental act of kindness, an Early Career Teacher completing their first term.

Understand that being on the frontline in education is tough: you have not made it this way, and you cannot fix the system. But your experience is the same as other leaders, and you can take great pride in serving your community in challenging times."

The SWIFT Team looks forward to playing our small part in supporting you and your colleagues in 2026.

CODE Maths Hub Conference

Thursday 28 February 2026 | 0900 – 1630 | Future Inns Plymouth PL6 5ZD

Keynote Speakers

Lee Elliot Major | Professor of Social Mobility at the University of Exeter.

Sue Johnston-Wilder | Associate Professor at the Centre for Education Studies at the University of Warwick.

Explore Equity in Maths Education - from Early Years to Post-16 and Teaching for Mastery to Core Mathematics.

A day packed-full of professional development, featuring keynote speakers and a choice of more than 15 workshops designed to explore Mathematics across all phases of education.

An opportunity to reflect on practice, share ideas, and collaborate across the CODE Maths education community.

Discounted ticket price of £40 for the SWIFT community.



BOOK YOUR PLACE AT THE CODE MATHS HUB CONFERENCE [HERE](#) (*SELECT PARTNER INSTITUTION*)

Cultivating a Culture of Belonging for All

Our recent SWIFT Central Teams' planning meeting concluded with a training session by Hannah Wilson, Director and Co-Founder of Belonging Effect (formerly Diverse Educators) on "Cultivating a Culture of Belonging for All."

At SWIFT, we know that it is essential to keep moving and thinking, and to look outwards and to think and challenge ourselves, especially on the issues that count.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) increasingly informs our delivery work that we undertake as Teaching School Hubs, with a purposeful understanding of the Nine Protected Characteristics so that everyone feels included and a sense of genuine belonging; especially those groups who historically have been underrepresented

Who has a seat? Who has a voice?



If you have ever met Hannah, you will know that she is a highly focused, motivated AND motivating Facilitator. Not only does she bring examples from her own broad experience, but she challenges us to think of our own – bringing agency and adding an awe-inspiring depth to the training founded on reality and truth.

The Result = intentional, inclusive and impactful professional development that continues to resonate.

The Three C's (the main session aims):

1. To grow **consciousness** of our own identities and the lived experience of others.
2. To build **confidence** in being comfortable with the uncomfortable, in doing the inner work before the outer work.
3. To develop **competence** in showing up, standing up and speaking out, as inclusive allies.

What did we takeaway/hold dear from the training?
LOTS! But here are a few to share with you now:

- ♥ Be curious, rather than critical.
- ♥ Be an "upstander" (call it out).
- ♥ Be able to ask questions about DEIB - no question is a silly question.
- ♥ Be proactive rather than reactive.
- ♥ Be the best version of ourselves.

If you are looking for a new challenge to start off your 2026 with intention, and you are interested in exploring DEIB to support you, your work in school/Trust, and in the classroom - you might like to find out more about our SWIFT DEIB Partnership Group.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SWIFT DEIB PARTNERSHIP GROUP [HERE](#) AND BELONGING EFFECT [HERE](#)

Engagement Report for 2024 - 2025 from The MaternityPaternity Project (MTPT)

Chances are if you have been (or if you currently are) on maternity/paternity/parental leave, you will be familiar with The MaternityPaternity Project (MTPT).

The MTPT is the UK's charity for parent-educators and supports colleagues as they become parents and return to the workforce, as well as the reciprocal role of helping schools and organisations to create more life-friendly working conditions for their staff to make teaching a sustainable career choice.

Maternity attrition is a pressing issue for the health of our workforce. The stats are stark. In the first four years following the return from maternity leave, almost 4,000 experienced teachers leave the profession and this peaks in the first 12 months back at work, where an average of 1,774 teachers (around 20% of each maternity cohort) leave.

The MTPT Cradle to Classroom programme of parental transition support aims to support colleagues in navigating this period in a positive and empowering way, enabling them to remain in a profession they love. Whilst retaining and building on their experience in schools.

The MTPT Project's Cradle to Classroom consists of three programmes:

1. Parental Leave Group Coaching
2. Return to Work Workshops
3. Sustain and Grow Group Coaching

The first two programmes are fully funded for State School colleagues in England thanks to support from 59 funders and the third is fully funded for State School colleagues in most regions in England.

SWIFT is pleased to support the work of The MTPT for our Teaching School Hubs region, which demonstrates strong engagement with Cradle to Classroom programmes, ranking second only to London and outperforms most regions, indicating a strong awareness and demand for parental transition support.

In Autumn 2025, 44 participants engaged across all three programmes. This uptake reflects a positive trend, particularly in the Return to Work and Sustain and Grow programmes, which are essential for supporting educators during parental transitions and retention phases. This balanced programme participation spans all three programmes, suggesting comprehensive regional interest and engagement rather than reliance on a single offering.

The MTPT is keen to build on success and to encourage participation that fully reflect their diversity goals, including more fathers, LGBTQ+ colleagues, and educators of Asian backgrounds. Plus, more participation from the Primary sector that is currently underrepresented across the country - including the South West.

92% of participants across all three programmes nationally were teachers or leaders in schools. Support staff roles included non-teaching pastoral leaders, Trust-wide colleagues, Estates Managers, Teaching Assistants and Personal Assistants. According to School Workforce Census data disaggregated by proxies of age and gender, there should be a 60:40 ratio of teacher to support staff participation on The MTPT programmes

Reports by Jude Baylis, SWIFT Executive Assistant

FIND MORE INFORMATION AND HOW TO BOOK:
[Return to Work Workshops](#) [HERE](#)
[Parental Leave Coaching](#) [HERE](#)
[Missing Mothers Conference](#) [HERE](#)

Interview with Nick Wakeling, Director of the Colyton Foundation

“I hope the sense of a regional movement to support under-resourced pupils will have gathered further momentum, and that the Colyton Foundation will have become a ‘go-to’ hub for all schools and other organisations looking to support higher attainers & HE progression within the region.”



Nick Wakeling is Director of Studies at Colyton Grammar School, and Director of the Colyton Foundation, a charity established to ensure that, for Young People in the South West, background is no barrier to flourishing at school, attaining highly and progressing to higher education.

We were pleased to interview Nick to find out more about his work for the Colyton Foundation.

1. How does your position as Director of the Colyton Foundation draw on your qualities and aptitudes?

The Colyton Foundation exists as a charity to support schools and pupils in the South West to make sure that students - particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds - are able to attain highly and access higher education. My background as a teacher with 15 years' experience in different schools, has been very helpful in terms of understanding schools as institutions. The way schools work, the challenges that teachers and school leaders must deal with every day and in particular, working at Colyton Grammar School for eight years, I have gained an understanding of what academically able students need to thrive and succeed.

This experience is combined with another huge influence on me personally from taking part in the SW100 Programme run by the Reach Foundation. In conjunction with lots of other schools and Trusts in the South West this provided me with fantastic opportunities to visit incredible schools and to hear from national experts who are doing great things to supporting disadvantaged and under-resourced students to flourish. Drawing on this experience and national expertise in visiting some inspiring schools has played a big part in the development of the Colyton Foundation.

However, what is slightly different about my role with the Colyton Foundation from my previous experience in schools is leading a charity that has grown from nothing. It feels more entrepreneurial in some ways compared to my first experiences as a teacher in terms of forging partnerships, bringing together different organisations, and scaling up an idea to something that is having an impact on the ground, and drawing on a different creative skill set. It has been fun, but also challenging, because there is no safety net of existing systems and institutions to draw upon.

As for my qualities, I would say perseverance and determination, and the ability to have a long-term vision and to put together into a strategic plan in order to get to where we wish to be.

2. What have you found to be the most personally rewarding in your role to date?

Following on from question 1 above, it has been most personally rewarding to take something from an idea to a reality. We are now at the point where the programmes are designed are now fully up and running.

We have yet to experience this moment, but we will shortly reach a hugely significant milestone when our cohort of 130 Year 7 pupils from 32 different schools across the South West physically come together for the two employer visits organised later this month to Leonardo Helicopters and Spaceport Cornwall. This will be a very special moment because the programme is all about bringing together those students and creating that sense of shared belief and a cohort identity, connecting the students and schools. Previously, we brought the cohort together remotely at the launch event back in October. It was wonderful to see all the students there in their schools waving to each other, supported by their parents, teachers and senior leaders. This brought home that project was up and running. It was real and reaching the students that we want to help access to opportunity. When we are together in person, I imagine it will be even more powerful.

Another particularly striking moment was our study visit for senior leaders in November to the University of Cambridge and two high performing schools in London. It was very rewarding to spend time with leaders from schools across the South West who so obviously share a commitment to supporting their students to achieve as highly as possible. It was hugely affirming to spend time in their company and hearing their reflections, for example when visiting Cambridge, commenting how the students were both hugely impressive, and on another level, no different from students in their schools in the South West, who can absolutely achieve the same things.

3. What insights are you gaining from working with various partners?

A huge amount!

Our model is fundamentally collaborative: it's about bringing together organisations with shared goals to pool expertise and resources. Our work can be so much powerful when we pull together.

Our partner universities, for example, are very experienced in widening participation and how to support students at the application stage of the university application process, and this advice and guidance have been hugely valuable.

Our partner schools have a highly nuanced understanding of the South West context and specific challenges facing their communities – often linked to rural and coastal isolation. Bringing together these first-hand lived experiences with the university perspective has been very powerful.

Finally, working with SWIFT has been incredibly helpful (and I am not only saying that because I am the January interviewee!). The experience and expertise of all the wonderful SWIFT colleagues in designing programmes at scale for teacher professional development has been instrumental as we have started to get our programmes up and running.

[READ THE FULL INTERVIEW WITH NICK WAKELING HERE](#)

[Find out more about SWIFT and our partners here](#) | 3

Three Things Schools can start doing about Oral Language with Devon Research School

Oral language interventions are well evidenced to improve pupils' literacy.


High-quality classroom talk also strengthens thinking and communication, helping students build deeper understanding across the curriculum. While all pupils benefit from structured oral language activities, the gains are often greatest for lower-attaining and disadvantaged students.

While the Department for Education (DfE), in its response to the Curriculum and Assessment review, has announced plans for a new oracy framework for primary settings, and an integrated oracy, reading and writing framework for secondary schools, there are actions schools can start taking now to strengthen oral language practices and prepare for the new frameworks.

1. Engage with research evidence to build expertise around oral language approaches


A strong foundation in evidence helps leaders and teachers make informed decisions and anticipate implementation challenges. In respect to oral language, the EEF's suite of literacy guidance reports and the Teaching and Learning Toolkit's Oral Language Interventions strand make a great starting point.

The **Teaching and Learning Toolkit**, for example, provides some starting points for thinking about where schools might look to sharpen oral language practices:



In oral language interventions, the adult might be:

- scaffolding pupils' speaking and listening;
- modelling high-quality speaking and listening;
- modelling metacognitive strategies for reading comprehension;
- using dialogic approaches;
- providing feedback; and
- teaching pupils how to use an oral language strategy for learning.



The pupils might be using oral language with the purpose of:

- learning reading or writing skills;
- developing their vocabulary;
- developing their ideas;
- making connections with prior knowledge;
- developing their conversation skills, or other speaking and listening skills; and
- developing their metacognitive awareness.

(from the Oral Language Interventions strand of the Teaching and Learning Toolkit).



Improving Oracy in Schools
January - April 2026

A three-day professional development programme for primary and secondary schools

This evidence-informed professional development programme helps schools strengthen oral language across the curriculum, from talk for learning to vocabulary, reading, and writing. It supports teachers and leaders to translate research into practice through structured reflection, practical tools, and collaborative planning.

Day 1: 23 January Explore the evidence base - what are some effective approaches? What's ineffective? We will use audit tools to assess current practice, and begin defining your school's key priorities in relation to oral language.	Day 2: 27 February Day 2 will focus on the role of oral language in supporting vocabulary development and reading. We will also think about next steps for implementation based on the audit tools from Day 1.	Day 3: 24 April On Day 3, we will explore the role of oral language in relation to writing. We will support you to develop an actionable implementation plan to ensure programme insights can be enacted in your own setting.
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Who is the programme suitable for?
The programme is suitable for Headteachers, Teaching and Learning leads, literacy leads, SENCOs, curriculum leaders, and teachers from primary and secondary schools who want to strengthen oral language as part of an evidence-informed approach to literacy and inclusion.

- £295 per person (£150 for a second delegate)
- All days run 9:30 - 15:00 & include lunch

BOOK: <https://forms.gle/UdLHmZRm9t294TRe7>

Exeter Racecourse, EX6 7XS | Alison.king@kingsbridgecollege.org.uk

And the **KS2 Literacy Guidance Report** (Recommendation 1) provides several concrete approaches teachers can take to increase the quality of classroom talk:

- asking open questions that require explanation, reasoning or argument.
- probing with follow-up questions.
- building on pupils' responses.
- encouraging pupils to ask their own questions.
- ensuring all pupils have genuine opportunities to articulate ideas.
- cultivating a classroom culture that values listening; and
- weaving dialogue intentionally into lesson planning.



Oracy CPD Opportunity!
Find more info [here](#)



Supported by the Education Endowment Foundation



[READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)
[READ MORE ABOUT DEVON RESEARCH SCHOOL HERE](#) AND [THE EDUCATION ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION HERE](#)

Guidance from SchoolPro TLC on Increased Cyber Attack Attempts on Staff Email Accounts

There has been a recent rise in cyber-attack attempts targeting staff email accounts.

In some cases, attackers have gained access to legitimate accounts and used them to send phishing emails to colleagues and contacts. These emails often appear genuine, making them particularly dangerous. They typically include links or attachments designed to capture login details or install malicious software.

Following the guidance below from our sponsor SchoolPro TLC can help staff protect themselves, their colleagues, and sensitive information from cyber threats. For further advice on cyber security or reporting procedures, please refer to your organisation's Data Protection Policies or contact your designated Data Protection Officer.



What Staff Should Do

Please remind all staff to remain vigilant. In particular:

- **Do not click in links or open attachments** in any email that seems unusual, unexpected, or suspicious.
- **Check the sender details carefully**, even if the email appears to come from a known colleague.

Report any suspicious emails immediately to your IT lead or Designated Safeguarding/ administrative contact.

If a Staff Email Account Is Suspected to be Compromised

If you believe a staff member's email account has been accessed by an unauthorised individual, please take the following steps without delay:

1. **Immediately reset the password** for the affected account using a strong, unique password.
2. **Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA)** if it is not already in place.
3. **Notify your IT support provider** so they can:
 - Check for any unauthorised login activity.
 - Review mailbox rules (hackers often add forwarding or deletion rules)
 - Remove any malicious emails sent from the account.
4. **Inform staff and relevant contacts** that a breach has occurred so they can avoid interacting with any phishing messages.
5. **Report the incident** in line with your school's data protection policy and notify your DPO.
6. **Run anti-virus and security scans** on the user's device to ensure no malware has been installed.

If a phishing attack results in a serious data breach, additional reporting and follow-up procedures may be required.

For guidance on handling such incidents and general cyber security best practices, staff should refer to their organisation's data protection policies or contact their designated Data Protection Officer.

For further guidance on this topic, please see SchoolPro TLC's advice on cyber-attacks.

The SchoolPro TLC Team is available should you wish to explore how they could support you. Contact for a **FREE** consultation.

By **Falguni Bhatt, Data Protection Officer at SchoolPro TLC**

FIND GUIDANCE ON REDUCING YOUR RISK OF CYBER THREATS AND RESPONDING TO CYBER INCIDENTS [HERE](#)
CONTACT THE SCHOOLPRO TLC TEAM ON 01452 947633 OR EMAIL [HERE](#)
FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE OTHER SCHOOLPRO TLC SERVICES [HERE](#)
FOLLOW ON [LINKEDIN](#) and [X](#)



SchoolPro TLC
Leadership Capacity

About Us

SWIFT is built on a partnership model of Colyton and Kingsbridge Teaching School Hubs; Teaching Alliances; local teacher training providers; Multi Academy Trusts; Kingsbridge Research School, Curriculum Hubs; Devon Schools Leadership Service; Teach First, The National Institute of Teaching and the Chartered College of Teaching.

By creating a strong, mature partnership, SWIFT acts as a multiplier within the education system, meaning we are much more than the sum of our parts. By working together in the spirit of mutual support and towards common goals we can make this a reality. The more than principle is enshrined in our logo, which is a stylised more than sign. >

We have a clear vision to be a trusted partner for schools. We are guided by a set of values that ensure we support teachers and leaders to improve the educational outcomes for all children and young people, especially disadvantaged groups. To achieve this vision in accordance with our values, we have developed clear aims that guide our activities, and a coherent theory of change to show how the issues facing schools, our activity and our aims all line up.

Keeping in Contact

You have received this newsletter because you are currently one of our Colyton and Kingsbridge Teaching School Hubs' Schools and Partners and/or you have asked to be added to our mailing list.

If we have not got your preferred email address correct, or should you wish to unsubscribe, then please email SWIFT Executive Assistant, Jude Baylis | Jude.Baylis@sw-ift.org.uk

Connect with us on our SWIFT socials for more updates and links to offers and news from our partners: [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#)

Our Sponsors



YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SPONSORS [HERE](#) AND READ THEIR BLOGS ON CURRENT TOPICS ON OUR NEWS PAGE [HERE](#)

Special Census Day Menu Boosts Uptake and Funding: Educatering Supports Schools Across the South West

With Census Day approaching on **Thursday 15 January 2026**, schools across the South West are gearing up to ensure pupils enjoy their school lunch and help maximise vital funding allocations.

The annual school census is a statutory data collection that provides the Department for Education and Local Authorities with key information on pupil numbers, free school meal eligibility and school dinner uptake, all of which drive decisions about school funding for the coming year.

For primary schools, in particular, it matters how many pupils take a school meal on census day. The data on meals taken by Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils, including those entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals, is used to allocate lunch-related funding and to ensure schools receive the right level of support for meal provision.

To help schools make the most of the day, Educatering has been working closely with its partner schools to produce special, exciting census day menus designed to boost uptake. From popular classics to themed options, the menus aim to encourage as many pupils as possible to choose a hot school dinner over packed lunches on the big day.

One South West primary has gone a step further, setting up an ice cream station at lunchtime where children can choose their own toppings; a tasty incentive that has already generated buzz among pupils and parents alike.

“Census Day isn’t just another date in the calendar,” says Jamie Walsh, Director at Educatering. “It has a real impact on the funding schools receive, which in turn affects the quality and reach of school meals and other pupil support. We’re proud to help our schools provide menus that pupils look forward to and that help drive strong participation on the day.”

Accurate census reporting underpins funding decisions that affect everything from universal free school meals to Pupil Premium allocations. By combining thoughtful planning with fun, engaging menu choices, Educatering’s work ahead of Census Day underlines the importance of lunchtime - not only for nutrition and enjoyment - but also for securing the resources schools need to serve children well throughout the year.



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EDUCATERING [HERE](#) AND CONTACT [HERE](#)
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Educatering
The School Food Revolution





Exeter Supply Partnership | new year planning

This time of year, often brings fresh planning and a clearer idea of the support your school and nursery might need. If you are exploring supply options for the term ahead, here are the **Top Five Reasons** why leaders say that they choose ESP.

1. **A familiar, local team who take time to understand your school.**
2. **No commission.**
3. **Quick, honest communication.**
4. **Supply staff who fit your values and approach.**
5. **Support that feels personal.**

Specialising in Early Years and Primary education across Devon and Torbay, ESP have a brilliant team of teachers and support staff with a wide range of experience: from Early Years specialists and Subject Leaders to people who have joined teaching from other careers and bring a variety of extra skills with them.

If you are reviewing your staffing options or want to chat about how we work, ESP are always here to help you.

-  **Call us: 01392 927171**
-  **Email [here](#)**
-  **Register your school online [here](#)**
-  **Join our Supply Team [here](#)**

FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT EXETER SUPPLY PARTNERSHIP [HERE](#) | CONTACT [HERE](#)
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