

The joys of teaching

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February 2024

Being in classrooms during January and meeting with teachers and leaders in schools, seminars and conferences, one is left in no doubt of the considerable challenges in classrooms and corridors.

They are real and probably unparalleled in my fifty years in the business.

Equally, chairing a group of primary, special and secondary colleagues optimistically focused on finding solutions, as I did in Essex on the last day of January, one is reminded of the personal and professional joys of the job.

Indeed, [read this](#) from a colleague in Birmingham, the most delightful evocation of daily school life.

The incoming HMCI has had a tough start. Time will tell whether a revamped Ofsted can *haunt schools less and make teachers and leaders prouder of their work*. It has been unfortunate that HMCI announced his presence with words only about the challenges of teaching and corridor management.

We all urge him to talk about the *joys* of teaching, captured by Claire Stoneman above. And what I see in sparkling classrooms every day around the kingdom are the following features of excellence which make up the great double act that is teaching and learning.

Let us champion these at every step to counter the drip, drip of negativity that risks dominating professional dialogue.

Xcellence

1. The teacher has *knowledge* effortlessly rising out of them like sap from a tree - and keeps perfecting their craft. Students are inspired.
2. The teacher *commands* the classroom, physically and intellectually, and students respond positively to that expertly planned climate for learning.

3. The *passion* for excellence and scholarship, rooted in the teacher's own achievements, is palpable and often thrilling. Children want to practise, rehearse and emulate top achievements.
4. A teacher's unambiguous set of *values*, embodying integrity and clear conscience, underpin memorable classroom practices. Children feel secure.
5. The *fun* in learning is teachers and students sharing humour and wit, rooted in risk-taking, digression and applying learning beyond the classroom.
6. The *creative* teacher has a predictable unpredictability about their person. Students know they are in for some memorable learning.
7. What teachers *expect* is what they get in any classroom, in any subject, and in any context. Children are no fools; they willingly respond to high expectations.
8. *Empathy* is that vital capacity in a teacher to imagine and understand that the learner may well have a different frame of reference. Students highly respect this.
9. *Resilience* is two-track: one for the pupils' stamina in new learning; and one for the teacher's self-preservation and ultimate flourishing. Both live to teach and learn another day.
10. *Reflecting* on what they are achieving in classrooms becomes the teacher's and the students' habit. Together, they practise being excellent.

The epitaph on Sir Christopher Wren's tomb in St Paul's Cathedral reads: 'si monumentum requiris, circumspice' – 'if you seek a monument, look around you'.

Colleagues, look around you in your schools - and admire what is going on in so many classrooms every hour of every day for children and young people.

Roy Blatchford's latest book is [The A - Z of Great Classrooms](#), published by John Catt.