

# BettFest Day 1: Leadership

## Bett Academy: The Connected Learning Centre – Leading Digital Strategy Now

### Summary

In this session, the London Connected Learning Centre explores the strategic considerations school leaders and education system leaders need to make in the continuing shift towards more blended learning and increased use of technology. How will we use what we have learned from the period of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve learning using digital technologies, professional development for teachers and communication with families? What are the implications for resourcing, feedback, and the creation and use of learning materials? How might we rethink the school day and deployment of teachers?

### Speakers

- **(Moderator) Sarah Horrocks** is the director of Education Development Trust's Connected Learning Centre in London, which supports schools and educators in all aspects of digital technology for learning. Sarah and her team have supported UK schools in the move to remote and blended learning with a particular focus on supporting children and families experiencing digital disadvantage.
- **Peter Lillington** is an experienced teacher, trainer, consultant and manager, Peter works with schools offering curriculum consultancy for computing curriculum from EYFS to post 16, developing effective technology-enhanced learning and the use of ICT across the curriculum.
- **Kate Atkins** has been teaching in Lambeth for over 25 years. She began her teaching career in Early Years, which is still an ongoing passion. Kate is Headteacher of Rosendale Primary School as well as CEO of the Great North Wood Education Trust, a Multi Academy Trust with a local secondary school.
- **Andrew Davis** joined the Board of Management of Naace with over 30 years' experience in teaching roles, from classroom level all the way through to multiple headteacher positions. Through his teaching career, Andrew developed an interest in technology and how best to implement progressive solutions on a school level.

### Discussion Points

**Schools and colleges are having to work hard to keep up with the needs of their education community, but it's essential that the overall digital strategy progression remains in place during these times.**

COVID-19 has brought the importance of digital transformation to the fore, and the education leaders who were already practising this back at the start of last year are the ones who have fared better since the pandemic began. Whilst this doesn't mean you have to become a technology expert, it does mean that your long-term digital strategy must remain a priority even in challenging times. Now that we're using technology in a very different way at every stage of teaching and learning, we must also remember to examine whether we are harnessing these new tool effectively – often the best way to do this is by comparing your best practice to other schools to make sure you're not missing a trick

early on. In this session, the team at the London Connected Learning Centre regularly reference the Naace self review framework, a tool which has helped thousands of schools to formulate a strong vision for their digital strategy and to put a plan in place to achieve it. You can find further links to this framework at the bottom of this handout.

*"Leaders from all kinds of organisations now need to consider digital transformation... From teaching and learning, internal and external communication, IT infrastructure and teacher professional development, technology is involved in every part of school life."* – Sarah Horrocks, Director, The Connected Learning Centre

*"At this moment, school leaders and staff will want to keep an eye on immediate needs and issues, but they must also keep looking toward the future."* – Peter Lillington, Teaching and Learning Consultant, The Connected Learning Centre

### **Make sure you're taking the time to find the right technology that works for you and your education community.**

In this session our expert educators explain the importance of making sure you are trying out different types of technology to find the right fit for your school, but Kate Atkins also notes the importance of starting off with something simple and familiar in order to bring students and families on board gently. At Rosendale Primary School, Kate introduced the use of Google Sheets in order to make sure she was getting constant feedback from students, parents and staff on how they felt about the new technology being used and identify what was not working. By prioritising communication between the school leadership team and the school's key stakeholders, she ensured that the digital strategy they developed was something that worked for everybody and used technology in the right way.

In a similar manner, Andrew Davis was careful to ask some specific, clear questions when evaluating his digital strategy at his small school in Shropshire in order to make sure the technology was performing the right function. Some examples of good questions to ask are: what do the pupils need to achieve? How can the school provide extra support to students and staff? In what areas does the school need to keep an eye on workload? By exploring to the key essential needs of his students and staff through his self-review framework, Andrew was able to develop a digital strategy which took into account the students and staff as well as the long-term goals of the school.

*"The thing which is vital when you're building a digital strategy is to understand the importance of personal relationships... we know that feedback is hugely important for young kids – it's hard to motivate yourself if you're not getting much of a response on the work you're doing."* – Kate Atkins, Headteacher and CEO, Rosendale Primary School and Great North Wood Education Trust

*"I came across the Naace SRF and this transformed my whole vision for teaching and my philosophy behind it. The SRF has been at the heart of everything I've done for the past 20 years in education."* – Andrew Davis, Headteacher & Board Member, Naace

### **Safeguarding must remain at the heart of every institution's digital strategy.**

While the pedagogy of remote and blended learning has been the main focus for many schools over the past year, it's essential to also make sure that students, staff and families are aware of the importance of safeguarding. As Peter Lillington mentions in this session, it's important to keep overarching policies such as this in mind when designing your wider digital strategy – in order to

make sure students don't slip through the cracks, the senior leadership team must make sure safeguarding is being considered at every stage of the digital strategy.

Andrew Davis also flags the importance of safeguarding in this session – he was careful to outline digital safeguarding as a core feature of his digital strategy early on. This involved developing a unique e-safety strategy for his school which allowed students to raise concerns when working from home and provided additional training for teachers in order to make sure they had the right skills to help.

*"One area of digital safeguarding is paramount to what we're doing – we've identified a whistleblowing feature where children have the option to reiterate their concerns when they're working from home." – Andrew Davis, Headteacher & Board Member, Naace*

*"It goes without saying that safety for all is a prerequisite. And the misleadingly small triangle at the top is, like the tip of an iceberg, a way of representing a whole repeating cycle for an institution and its stakeholders which won't happen without clear leadership." – Peter Lillington, Teaching and Learning Consultant, The Connected Learning Centre*

## Homework

1. **Make sure your digital strategy is focused on long-term goals and not just fixing immediate problems.** How do you see your students working in a post-pandemic world? What features of your current working day are here to stay? What technology do you need to ensure you can continue to provide high quality teaching and learning after the pandemic?
2. **Take the time to try out different tools and find the right technology for you.** Are you using a self-review framework to evaluate how well your current technology is working? Have you looked for experts and role models who have achieved the goals you are working towards? What do your students, families and staff think about the technology you are using?
3. **Prioritise communication, safety and wellbeing within your digital strategy.** Do students and families feel able to raise concerns when they arise? Is your digital strategy reducing workload instead of increasing it? Do you have a clear safeguarding policy which is tailored to the technology you use?

## Further Reading

You can sign up for the CLC's weekly newsletter and blog on their website, <https://londonclc.org.uk/>

You can follow Naace [here](#), or explore their self review framework [here](#).

Education Development Trust EDT: [www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com](http://www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com)

This week the CLC have launched a new website supported by IBM's trustee fund that focuses on the pedagogy of blended and remote learning and provides advice from teachers and school leaders as well as short courses and guides. Check it out here: <https://blended.org.uk/>

Education Endowment Foundation reports mentioned in the presentation can be found below:

i. [Blog on live teaching and pre-recorded video lessons](#)

ii. [Remote learning evidence review](#)

iii. [School Planning Guide 2021](#)

iv. [Remote Professional Development evidence review](#)

EDUCATE's guide on buying the right EdTech for your school can be viewed here:

<https://www.educateventures.com/schools>

Check out the UK Safer Internet Centre (SWGfL) for advice on safeguarding on their website [here](#) or their 360 safe tool here: <https://360safe.org.uk/>

Kate mentioned some great tools including [White Rose Maths](#), [Teachsport](#) and [Kagan Professional Development](#). You can find out more about [Rosendale Primary School here](#).

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