

What If Learning: An Approach to Character Education in Church Schools

Fruit of the Spirit Conference

9th June 2016

Professor Trevor Cooling



School leaders are the interpreters of faith for the community

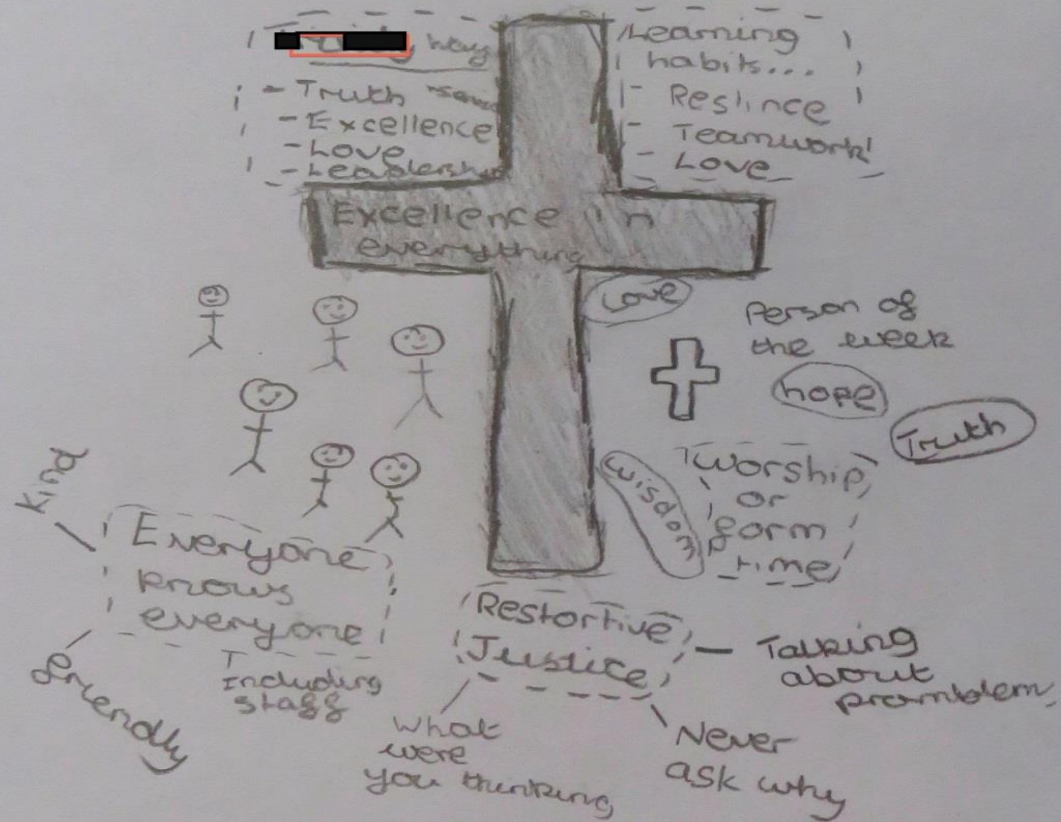
Leadership and faith: working with and
learning from school leaders (NCSL)

The Challenges

- “Weird”
- “Levering in”
- The impulse to tell

What Makes My School Special

- Very small school.
- Everyone knows everyone
- Very christian



Christian Ethos

- Ambience
- Curriculum Content
- Pedagogy

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the heart of the enterprise. It gives life to educational aims and values, lifts the curriculum from the printed page, mediates knowing and learning, engages, inspires and empowers learners...or sadly fails to do.

Robin Alexander

Distinctively Christian MFL Teaching ?

Foreign languages education in the Christian vision as preparation for:

1. Exercising hospitality to the stranger
2. Being a good stranger when visiting overseas



The Importance of Perspective

Young Woman
or Old Woman?

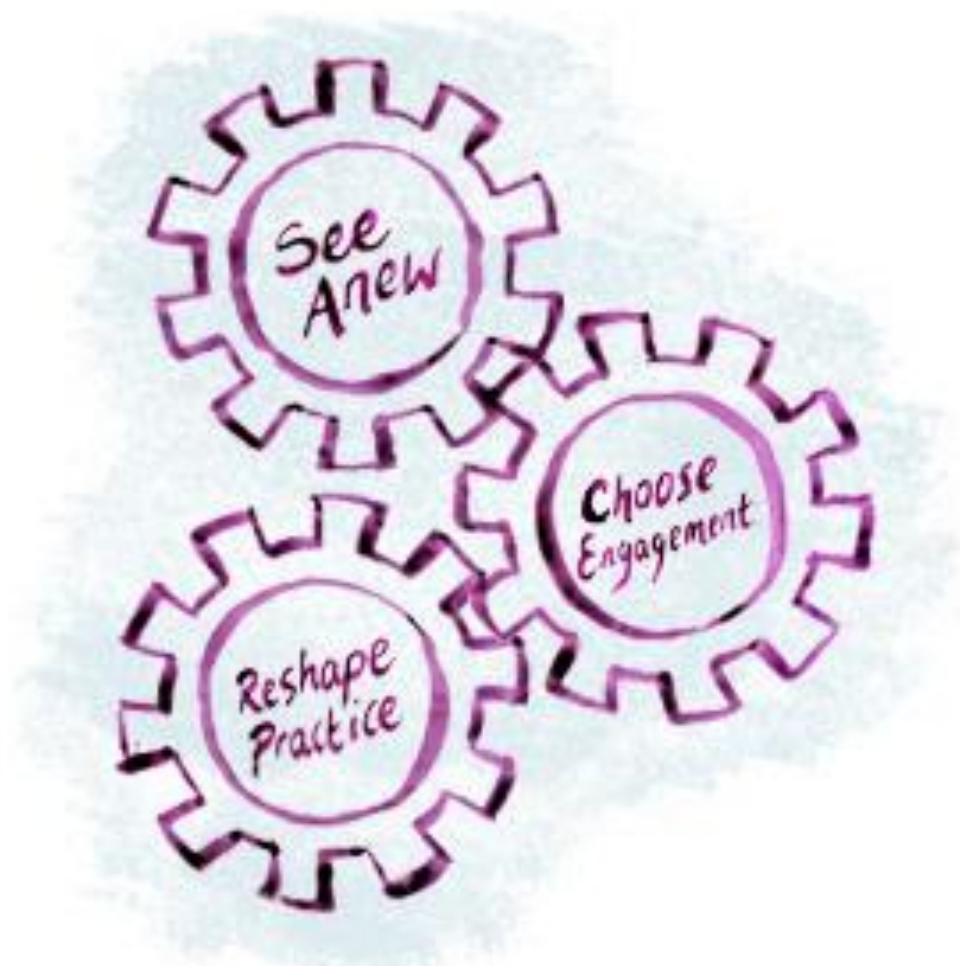


Nicky Morgan's Speech

- And this government is committed to making sure every child can compete with their international peers - securing their future, and the economic security of our country.
- For too long, our young people were left behind their counterparts from other countries.

CBI 9 November 2015

What If Learning



The approach

Seeing anew:

How could a Christian understanding of God, people and the world provide a different way of seeing a lesson/unit?

Choosing Engagement:

How could the students engage with this new way of seeing?

Reshaping practice:

What changes to my practice do I need to make as a teacher?



DfE Character Project

- DfE values of respect, tolerance, community spirit and neighbourliness
- Hospitality



Hospitality

- Being good listeners
- Able to explain why certain things are important to other people
- Being good welcomers
- Empathy (walking in others shoes)
- Expressing their own views with respectful conviction
- Able to adapt to unfamiliar circumstances in appropriate ways.
- Welcoming the stranger
- Generosity of spirit and action
- Desire and ability to promote the common good

Investigating Durability of Rocks (Year 5)

- Seeing anew – Curiosity towards other people's views.
- Choosing engagement – developing respect.
- Reshaping practice – reflection time in science.

“We need to communicate well with each other as each other's opinion counts”

The PE Teacher: The Push Pass



- We were learning how to encourage someone else in their skill development.
- Coaching as the framing concept

The Stonemasons



Why are we doing this?

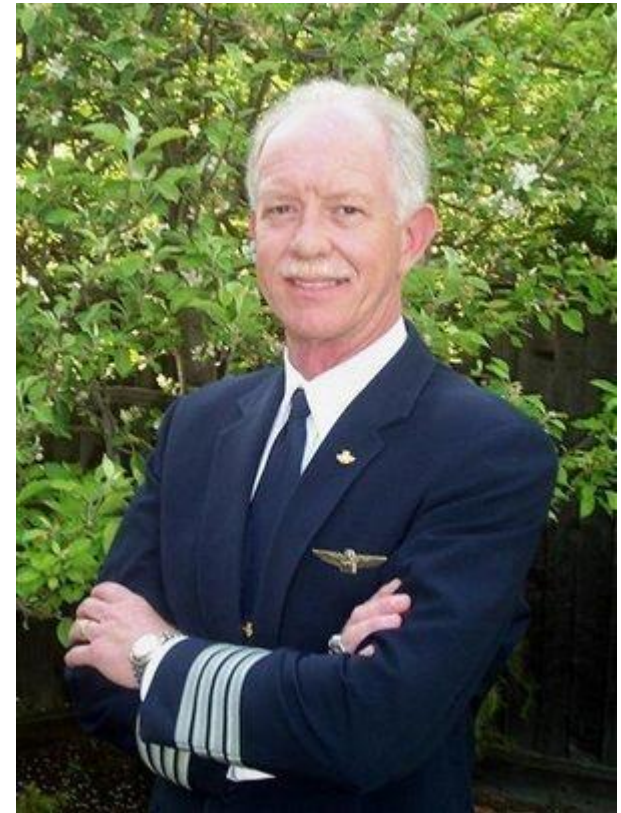
- One responds: “I am cutting this stone in a perfectly square shape.” The other responds: “I am building a cathedral.”
- Their experiences of what they are doing and their sense of self in doing it are rather different. This difference is a function of imagination. As a result, they may be learning very different things from the same activity. (Wenger, 1998, p.176)

Two Key Questions

- **What are our aspirations for our pupils?**
- **What do our pupils imagine they are doing in their classrooms?**



Building Christian Character



Habit Forming!



The Challenges

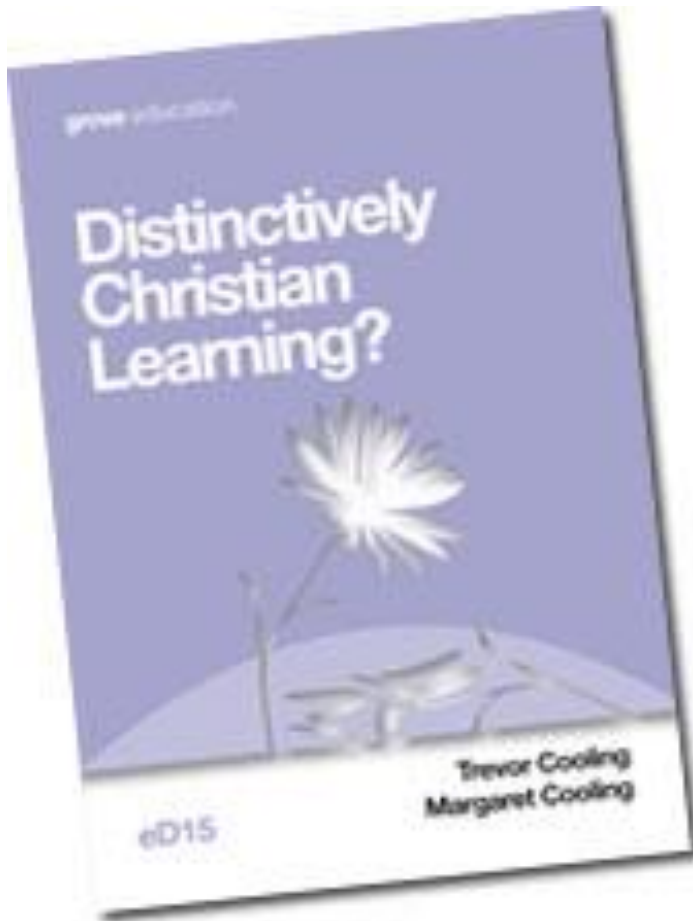
- “Weird”
- “Levering in”
- The impulse to tell
- Insufficiently Christian

Tokenistic, Wishy-washy Christianity?

Faithfulness to
the Christian
tradition in the
way that schools
undertake the
tasks of education

Uniqueness by
distinguishing
Christian
schools from
every other kind
of school

www.grovebooks.co.uk



Forthcoming Book (May 2016)

Christian Faith in English Church Schools:
Research Conversations with Classroom
Teachers

Trevor Cooling with Beth Green, Andrew
Morris & Lynn Revell

Peter Lang Publishers

www.whatiflearning.co.uk

Grandparents' Day (Year1)

- Seeing anew – developing curiosity about other people and welcoming
- Choosing engagement – practice of hospitality
- Reshaping practice – Plan use of visitors with specific focus

“I liked it when the grown-ups explained about their favourite toy”

Seminar Task

- Choose a unit of work or lesson to focus on. What do you think pupils will imagine they are doing in this unit or lesson as it stands?
- How could that unit or lesson be reframed to develop a character trait that embodies a Christian virtue? (SA)
- What activities can the pupil experience in order to support that reframing? (CE)
- What practices of the teacher will support that reframing (RP)?

