



SSAT Journal 14

Spring 2019

ssat the schools, students
and teachers network

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Welcome

Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT

The DfE needs to listen to teachers

I have now reached the point in my career when I no longer feel the need to be diplomatic about the Department for Education: it is not fit for purpose.

For all the rhetoric about being school-led, the Department and its ministers feel they know best. They don't – they need to step away from interfering with practice and create the environment in which teachers and young people thrive. They need to demonstrate that they appreciate the professionalism and experience of teachers. This will help to recruit and retain teachers.

Reading the articles in this term's journal endorses my view that we have very talented teachers, who are keen to bring together research and practice. There is so much in these articles to support great teaching. SSAT is a passionate advocate of the profession leading the way in education, and this is why we support the Chartered College of Teaching.

Our own professional body

We have waited far too long for our own professional body to champion great teaching and raise the status of the profession. I was delighted when Alison Peacock was appointed chief executive and Stephen Munday elected president. Both are former headteachers with a passion for excellent education for all young people and a commitment to developing a highly skilled and knowledgeable profession. We hope that all teachers will seize this once in a lifetime opportunity and join the College.

I am pleased to say that SSAT and the College are working together with the stated ambition of raising the status of the profession. I look forward to sharing more details with you over the coming months.

Enjoy the journal, and if you would like to contribute please email your relationship manager on rmteam@ssatuk.co.uk.

Sue Williamson,
SSAT

SSAT IS FIGHTING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

As we launch our *Deep Social Justice* campaign, we want to work directly with schools to shape the agenda.

We would like to hear your views in order to understand the barriers you face in achieving social justice, what you are already doing to promote social justice, and help position social justice as a driving force for English education.

Visit ssatuk.co.uk/dsj to share your views.



National Extension college can help you out of those awkward timetable clashes

*Ros Morpeth OBE,
National Extension College*

Ros Morpeth OBE, chief executive, National Extension College, shows how their service can support schools by providing a distance learning alternative for a wide range of GCSE and A-level subjects

What are the circumstances in which a school or academy will benefit from using your services?

Generally, the circumstances are to do with gaps in the curriculum or timetable clashes. So a student who wants to do A-level English and history along with classical civilisation may be enrolled with NEC for the classical civilisation course. But there are other situations where, for example, a student has a health problem like ME which makes it hard to attend school on a regular basis. Or we have had cases where a teacher has left due to illness, leaving

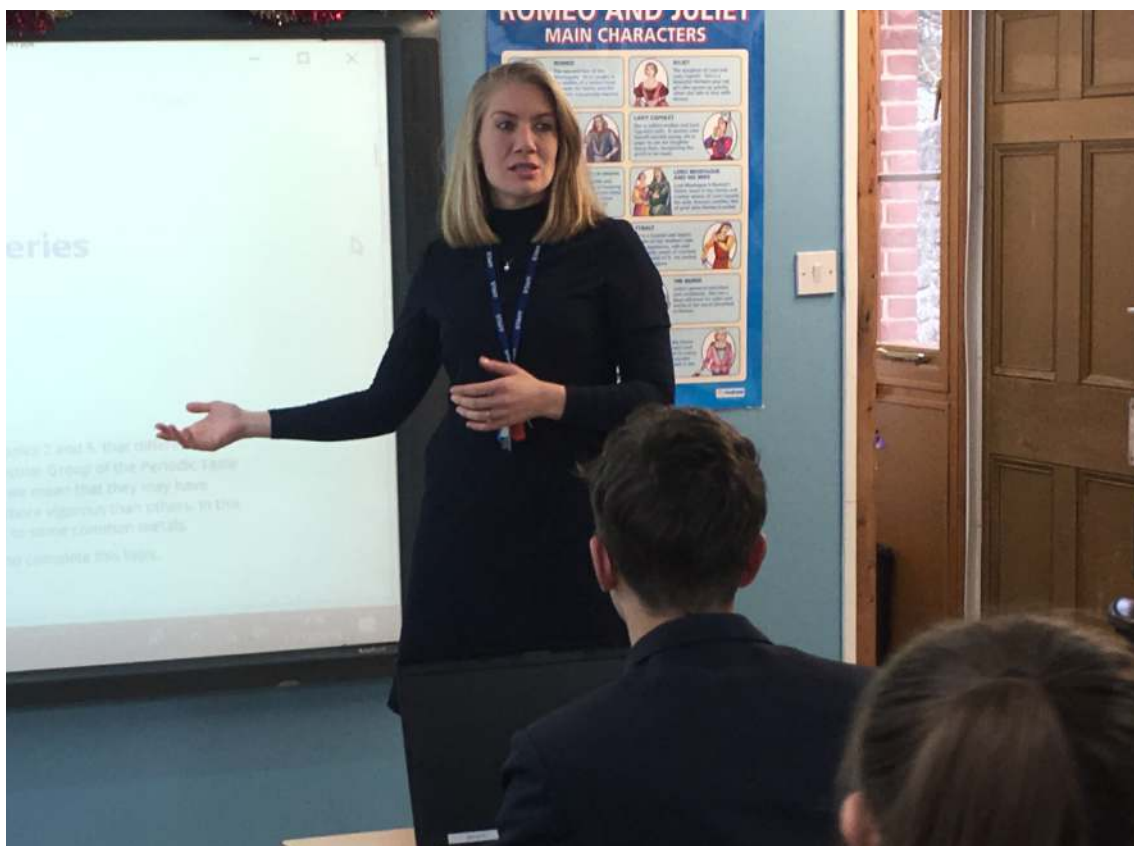
a group of students high and dry. Also, because we operate a rolling enrolment we can take on a student who has arrived late in the term.

This service reduces the need for supply teachers or bussing students to other schools for small classes or specialist subjects. And it can maintain subjects such as modern foreign languages when they are threatened by budget cuts.

How do you work with schools generally?

The most usual model is that a school contacts us when there is a gap that NEC can fill. So we might just have one student in a school or several students doing different subjects. For NEC it is obviously better to have a long-term connection with a school because our staff get to know their staff and can





form a good relationship with them. One interesting example this year is a small independent school just setting up and using NEC for all their GCSE and A-level curriculum. We are monitoring this school closely.

What if a student is on your course severely underperforming, or even just not completing the assignments? How do you coordinate with the school in such circumstances?

We provide monthly progress reports to the school, and the NEC tutor will work with the school to try and help. We do say clearly in our brochure that this model works best for students who are well organised, highly motivated and well supported by the school.

While the flexibility of a distance learning course is suitable for many learners, NEC recognises that sometimes more structure is needed, particularly for younger learners. Its 'enhanced service' offers additional student support, guiding them through their course in a personal and more structured manner. It includes proactive contact from their personal tutor and NEC, reminds students when work is due, and enables schools to be involved

as much or as little as they like. Its courses are designed to work on Moodle, and support students with standalone self-study topics including videos, a variety of questions, feedback, and a forum to promote engagement and discussion.

Are there sometimes differences in approach or standards between NEC and individual schools/academies that need to be catered for, and if so, how?

In general, no. But the independent school I mentioned is a Christian school and have, for example, added their own take on the theory of evolution to support their biblical view. However, they were quite satisfied with the content and removing course material was never a consideration (NEC does not remove any of the course material because it is written to meet the specification). Some schools tell us that they encourage students to do some learning at a distance because it develops good time management and promotes independent learning.

We have just launched GCSE astronomy, A-level further maths and AS thinking skills. We also offer non-mainstream subjects like philosophy. It is worth noting that NEC is an exam centre in its

own right and this enables us to authenticate and mark coursework for subjects like A-level English language, English literature and history. We then transfer the student to the school to sit their written exams.

Our website is frank about the limitations of this remote service education service. The free guide for schools includes a section headed: 'Know your students: will this service work for them?' It includes: 'NEC is proud of the quality of our courses and of the excellent tutorial support which is at the heart of what we offer. But we would be the first to say that online learning is not suitable for all students. It works best for committed students who have a mature approach to learning and are genuinely interested in their chosen subject. It can support a student who: needs to retake a subject, is absent through illness, is unwilling to attend

school, or wants to change subjects part-way through a term.'

Some students need more structure and mentoring to manage their 'independent' studies, and we have seen successful models where a school or a parent provides this additional support combined with NEC's enhanced service.

There will inevitably be other students who can only function within a set timetable and deadlines, and we would suggest that schools give careful consideration before enrolling these students. Our courses assume students speak English as their first language, or at a very high level. If you are unsure whether a course will be suitable for one of your students you can download a sample of the relevant course from our website www.nec.ac.uk.

One school's experience of NEC's service

Maranatha Christian School in Swindon has been using NEC's resources since September 2018 for the sciences and maths, as they have recently rolled-out GCSEs and A-levels. "It came out tops in content, delivery and fitting in with our aim for mastery learning," says the head, Grant Kauffman. "In addition, it gave a lot more helpful information than other suppliers who were considered and extensively researched. Teachers deliver a number of lessons from the front, but students can continue learning on their own. In exceptional cases such as when a staff member is absent due to illness or further training, students are quite able to continue without the immediate guidance or support from the specialist science or maths educator; this ensures that progress is not impeded. However, we can always revisit a section as a means to ensure that the concept has been mastered."

Maranatha was new to the GCSE curriculum, and the various science options provide an example of NEC's support: "Initially we did not fully understand how double science worked against the three individual sciences. We received good support and advice, so we could make an

informed decision in order to provide the best option for individual students. NEC's system is the perfect foil for our teaching methodology and endeavour for mastery learning with the progressive personalised system of instruction (PSI), pioneered by Fred Keller. As a result of partnering with NEC, the roll-out of our GCSEs has been a resounding success, with students consistently achieving outstanding marks on assessments," claims Grant Kauffman.

According to the senior science teacher at Maranatha, Mrs Mandy Gilchrist, "assessments ask higher level questions requiring analysis, application and recall. Practical experiments are beautifully laid out and can be done with easily sourceable apparatus and reagents. There is a very fast turnaround time with respect to marking and extensive feedback on assignments, which highlight expectations of GCSEs."

The headteacher concludes: "A very important factor is feedback on students' work. NEC's feedback was very good; the marking was strict but fair, and never more than 5% out, according to our moderation."