Oddments

The language you use is very important to the impression you convey about the quality of your school and leadership. The language commonly used in your school tends to be universal, and tells a visitor what the standards are in your school within seconds. This article from *Pocket* gives a list of six words you should avoid using. It's also worth practicing phraseology with key leaders in your school. Remember:

Outstanding – the language of inevitability: 'We will get these boys to the expected level by Easter' (and that is what then happens);

Good – the language of proper analysis: 'We know we're good at this because…; We know we need to improve at this because…';

Requires Improvement – the language of excuse: 'The reason we haven't got these boys to expected is because…' or defining failure because of single pupils: 'X came late to the school and reduced the year group average, and then Y was away for several weeks.';

Failing – the language of the closed mind: 'We did that five years ago. It didn't work then and won't work now.'; 'We don't need to go to the training, we have all the skills we need in school.'; 'We don't need to change that, it's working perfectly well.'

Documentation. School Improvement Plans of forty pages or more are still to be found in schools. These are probably not Improvement Plans, but Action Plans. An improvement plan sets out the vision – what the most important things the school needs to change will look like when the improvement has been made. An Action Plan lists the actions to be taken and who will take them. Only the people needing to take action need a copy of the Action Plan, but all in the school community need to know the School Improvement Plan objectives. A School Self-Evaluation (not 'SEF' which is old Ofsted terminology) should be a proper assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses, not an advert by the head to the governors for how marvellous everything is.

Golden rules:

- *Brevity*: set out what you want to say in the fewest possible words, on the fewest pieces of paper
- *No repetition*: if the information appears somewhere else (e.g., the school website) it does not need to be repeated
- *Avoid description, use evidence*: evaluate and analyse

Ofsted reports on the effects of lockdown:
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Teachers self-isolating In some schools, teachers who are self-isolating continue to teach by delivering lessons from home, using the classroom interactive whiteboards. A computer is turned to face the class, so the teacher can see the pupils, and a teaching assistant monitors pupils in the classroom. Schools using this system report how successful it has been.

COVID case studies. Several articles in the Spanish newspaper El Pais give a very clear account of the risks taken when associating with others, and explain why some catch C-19 when others don't:

- [An analysis of three Covid-19 outbreaks: how they happened and how they can be avoided](#)
- [A room, a bar and a classroom: how the coronavirus is spread through the air](#)
- [The K factor: why it matters where we are infected with the coronavirus](#)

Performance management. Many schools tie the cycle in to distinct times of the school year, particularly before Christmas. However, this approach was removed from the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) several years ago, and a report from the National Governors' Association (NGA) since then concluded that schools that continue to follow this cycle have not really thought the process through.

By completing the cycle for all staff in the second half of the autumn term, all objectives are then set for the school's needs at that point in time, and do not take into account school needs throughout the rest of the year. It is recommended that performance management is spread throughout the year. It has to be completed within a twelve-month cycle, and it is only changes to pay which must start from 1st September. The advantages of doing this include:

- The needs of the school throughout the year are reflected in objectives set for teachers
- The workload in carrying out performance management interviews is spread across the year
- The School Improvement Plan can be seen as a constantly developing document, rather than set at a point in time.

A school's needs for improvement change across the year, and the performance management system should be set to reflect this.

SBS Educational

The use of a 'business case'. A school's core business is improving outcomes for pupils. In a mainstream school this may mean working to improve academic outcomes, such as SATs or GCSEs. In a special school, it may mean working to improve pupils' life chances and independence as adults. When presenting ideas for change to staff or governors, it is worth considering setting this out as a business case – how will the 'business' of the school be improved by what is proposed? Ideally, three options will be set out, and one recommended, with reasons given for why one is preferred over the rest. The premise for the change will always be set out first: why does this need to be changed, and why now: what is the evidence for change? It will also be costed, and this will be in terms not just of money, but four equal 'costs':

finance; human resources; educational resources: teacher workload

Recommended book:

Factfulness by Hans Rosling. This sets out several premises, including:

- There may be some bad things out there, but overall, things are getting better
- People think they know things that they don't

Only make statements when you have evidence

Articles in The Guardian:

- ['It's been tumultuous': Covid-19 stress takes toll on teachers in England](#)
- [What do we know about the spread of Covid-19 among children in the UK?](#)
- ['We're down to two maths teachers. The head of maths is almost in tears': diary of a headteacher's week](#)
- [This Christmas, please thank a headteacher for the miracles they have achieved](#)