



THE PERFECT TEACHER



Jackie Beere



Praise for *The (Practically) Perfect Teacher*

Jackie Beere has the great skill of making links between some complex ideas of research and theory and the practical reality of daily life in the classroom. Her book resonates with images that teachers will recognise as things that happen with pupils in the everyday quest for learning. She offers step-by-step advice and suggestions that are tailored in a way that can be used tomorrow. The advice is built upon sound research that is explained and grounded to make it accessible. This wisdom is then trained on the pressures that teachers find themselves under and the excitement of the job.

Jackie has produced an engaging book, full of a passionate belief in the satisfaction to be gained from the professional job of teaching. The book oozes with sense, techniques to try and the joy of seeing young people learning.

Mick Waters, Professor of Education, Wolverhampton University

In an ever-changing educational context, *The Practically Perfect Teacher* passionately inspires and energises by explicitly highlighting the key habits of an effective teacher. Through her reader-friendly style, Jackie Beere enables the reader to combine the notions of self-belief and a fervent desire to succeed along with a child-centred approach to provide practical strategies for all teachers seeking to deliver impact and make a positive difference to the lives of children!

**Haroon Asghar, Deputy Head Teacher,
Brookhouse Community Primary School**

The book is packed with honest, down-to-earth ways we can all make the learning journey of young people more worthwhile and memorable: from theory which challenges long-held beliefs to classroom practice ideas that reinforce what is expected of outstanding teachers. The book is bound to stimulate staffroom debate and motivate teachers to reflect on their practice. Nothing the book suggests is budget-breaking or beyond the reach of any school, and we will certainly be using most of the teaching strategies and ideas suggested. In fact, we can't wait to get started!

I found it really easy to read – quite a page turner – and as a true lifelong learner I wanted to find out more!

Much of the book reaffirms my beliefs about teaching; however, every chapter has those 'little gems' that can make a huge difference to any school. I will certainly put it on the essential reading list of every teacher in my school. As always, Jackie's top tips are superb school-improvement ideas in a nutshell.

Beverley Dandy, Head Teacher, Outwoods Primary School

A concise and engaging book which focuses on the teacher and their impact on students. This is a book which explores why teachers teach and how they can improve how they teach. This is a book for anyone involved in education; although many of the examples have a school context, the principles apply to all those tasked with developing understanding and knowledge in others. This book is ideal for experienced teachers seeking motivation, reinvigoration or simply a fresh perspective but may also prove highly beneficial for those seeking pearls of wisdom at the start of their career.

Drawing on a wealth of experience and research, the author outlines a framework for continual self-development, driven not by external quality procedures but a desire to maximise the achievement and personal development of the students. The book includes practices and rituals to develop student-focused teachers, driven by feedback in which the teacher is reflective, adaptive and innovative. There is a strong focus on the student as a partner in the educational process, influencing their teaching through feedback, and engaging with the teacher and their peers to develop both academically and as an individual. As a university lecturer, I see the development of students as independent learners, who are engaged and enthusiastic about education, as an essential component of teaching.

**Dr Glenn Jenkins, Lecturer, University of Wales Trinity St. David:
Swansea Metropolitan**

At a time when the pressure on teachers is greater than it ever has been, Jackie reminds us why we chose this wonderful profession and of the enormous difference we can make to the lives of the children we teach. Not only is this book packed with practical ideas that you can apply in your classroom immediately, it will also challenge you to step back and take a much closer look at the unconscious habits, attitudes and values that ultimately determine how effective you are as a teacher.

Whilst there is no guarantee that reading this book will make you the 'perfect teacher', it will certainly help you to become the best teacher you can possibly be, and who can ask for more than that?

James Bowen, Head Teacher, Mill Rythe Junior School

After reading *The Practically Perfect Teacher* I can't wait to try out some of Jackie's ideas! I believe, as teachers, we are always striving to be the very best we can but are never satisfied with any of our achievements - always feeling we can do that bit better. Hopefully with the advice and guidance from this book we can ultimately achieve our goal.

**Leisha Champion BA (Hons) PGCE,
Foullanesend Community Primary School**

I am so pleased to have read this uplifting book which reminded me that I have the best job in the world! A term of teaching can leave you feeling weary, stressed out and counting the 'wake-ups' until the next break. However, after reading this book, I could not wait to get back into class to try out some new techniques, ideas and 'mindset tweaks'.

I have already implemented the 3B4ME and my class suggestions board is teeming with feedback from pupils who are taking control of their own learning. I had a smile on my face all day long when a usually reticent pupil excitedly filled in a sticky note for the suggestions board and explained a starter activity which he had devised to improve our learning!

I feel I am being a lot more honest with my pupils, explaining that the 'learning zone' is not a 'comfort zone' but will be challenging, frustrating and even painful at times. My class are also embracing more fully the concept that every mistake is a learning experience.

This book has encouraged me to reflect more honestly on my teaching, but not to beat myself up when something hasn't gone to plan. Instead, I am embracing the fact that there is no such thing as failure, only a part of the journey towards success!

Sue Ware, KS2 Teacher, The King John School

Jackie is forever inspiring, both in how she presents and in what she has to say. I think this book is her best yet! It's an amazing book. Normally education-based books can be dry and uninspiring. This book, however, is very well written and presented. I could not put it down! The book is a concise approach to quality first teaching and learning, with a huge emphasis on the learning. It is great how it reflects on Ofsted and the criteria for good learning. It's a must-read for all teachers old and new! I certainly will be ordering copies for my staff!

Shane Jarman, Head Teacher, Denaby Main Primary School

This is the third of Jackie's books I have read, and she continues to summarise a complex profession, whilst allowing for the necessary individual approach, in a short helpful and easy-to-read form. There is a danger with any book that claims to help someone become the 'perfect' teacher that the advice will be patronising, impractical and easily misunderstood. Jackie overcomes all these hurdles by ensuring an up-to-date knowledge of the demands of teaching through practical involvement and extensive research. At no point does Jackie take it for granted that teachers have excess time for preparation as all hints and tips are quick to read and translate into the classroom. This book is for any teacher, whatever their experience and subject. There is genuinely something new and useful to help every lesson progress with high levels of pupil engagement and challenge.

**Hannah Horwood, Assistant Head (Teaching and Learning),
Surbiton High School**



Jackie Beere



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This book is dedicated to our grandchildren. Dearest Jack, who lived for such a brief moment, and the beautiful Lyla Elizabeth, who brings so much pleasure every day.

May the next generation of young learners enjoy an education that inspires and fulfils them ... and may they meet teachers who absolutely love their jobs.

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I would like to thank all the wonderful teachers and school leaders who I have had the pleasure of working with over the past few years. Their determination to make a difference and their enthusiasm for learning how has been the inspiration for this book. A special thanks to all those who welcomed me into their school to train or observe; each and every time I work with teachers I learn something new.

Introduction

The quality of a country's education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.

Michael Barber and Mona Mourshed¹

All the evidence shows that the most valuable assets of any successful school are the teachers, delivering lessons to children every day. We cannot underestimate the power and influence of a great teacher in the life of a child. No matter what changes are made to systems or to the curriculum or inspection regimes, one certainty remains: children will be helped or hindered in their progress, learning, self-esteem, qualifications, job prospects, life chances and, indeed, happiness by the teachers they come across over their 13 years in the education system. So teaching is still a wonderful, powerful, vitally important job, despite the uncertainty created by changing political currents.

This book aims to consider how to be the very best teacher you can be, not just for Ofsted or for your line manager, but for the kids – because there is nothing better than delivering great lessons that inspire them. Helping youngsters, for

¹ M. Barber and M. Mourshed, *How the World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out On Top* (London: McKinsey & Company, 2007), p. 13.

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whom you may be the only hope, to develop a motivation to learn and encouraging them to experience the excitement of achieving great results is life-changing stuff and worth getting up for. However, it is hard work – harder than ever – and the expectations that you will deliver are very high, so you need to be made of stern stuff to be a teacher. You have to be the ultimate lifelong learner, willing to reflect, self-evaluate, adapt, be eternally optimistic and massively determined to make a difference for *all* your pupils – even those who push your buttons! There will be times in your career when it won't seem worth it or when it all goes wrong. However, if you can learn from this then you will be a better teacher for it. I have found inspiration from a speech given by J. K. Rowling to Harvard University alumni where she celebrates the strength and resilience created by making mistakes and surviving adversity:

Failure gave me an inner security that I had never attained by passing examinations. Failure taught me things about myself that I could have learned no other way.²

Teaching is a profession where you never stop learning from your mistakes or wondering what else you can do to inspire, intrigue, motivate or mesmerise your classes. The challenge is

² J. K. Rowling, 'The Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Importance of Imagination'. Commencement Address at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Harvard Alumni Association.

Introduction

on for our 21st century schools. We need to develop ‘learning that is irresistible’, as Mick Waters so aptly describes in *Thinking Allowed on Schooling*³ – and avoid being tempted by shortcuts that make a quick-fix impact on exam results but fail to develop great learners who can confidently compete for jobs in a global marketplace.

This book doesn’t cover everything you need to be a ‘perfect’ teacher (there is no such thing, of course), but it points the way along that eternal learning journey to be the very best you can be – so that you can help your pupils be the very best they can be.

And then that will be the very best job you could ever have.

3 M. Waters, *Thinking Allowed on Schooling* (Carmarthen: Independent Thinking Press, 2013), p. 290.

Chapter 1

Framing your mind – thinking on purpose

Do you love your job? For at least 70% of the week? Do you wake up on a school-week Monday morning excited and enthusiastic about the challenges the week will bring? Are you energised by the thought of finding a way, at last, to turn your most recalcitrant pupil on to learning?

However, on a rainy Friday afternoon at the end of a long hard term, when the class seem oblivious to how you tried to make it interesting and fun because they prefer texting love messages, interrupting the lesson by shouting obscenities or just gazing longingly at the door and waiting for the bell, it's bloody hard! If you don't feel useless and challenged some of the time, you will never have the motivation to find new strategies that could turn that difficult class around. It's not what happens to you, it's how you respond to it that will matter as a teacher – and how you respond depends on how you think about things. This chapter will help you discover how to have the mindset that will help you be the best teacher you can be. And yes, it is a choice. Decide now that you will suspend disbelief and take control of your thinking.

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It will help you to be a better teacher and, as a side benefit, it will help every other aspect of your life.

In John Hattie's seminal work *Visible Learning for Teachers*,¹ he argues that the most successful teachers and school leaders believe that they are 'agents of change' and work in schools that nurture this way of thinking in their teachers. Hattie outlines eight mindframes teachers and leaders have which maximise impact on learning in schools:

Teachers/leaders:

1. Believe that their core task is to evaluate the effect of their teaching.
2. Believe that success and failure in student learning is about what *they* did or did not do.
3. Want to talk more about the learning than the teaching.
4. See assessment as feedback about the impact of their teaching.
5. Engage in dialogue with their students and *listen* to them.
6. Enjoy the challenge and avoid making excuses or just 'doing their best'.

¹ J. Hattie, *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* (London: Routledge, 2012).

7. Believe that it is their role to develop positive relationships in classrooms/staffrooms.
8. Inform all about the language of learning.

Make no mistake: the way you think makes you the teacher that you are. After research based on 800 meta-analyses of 50,000 articles with 150,000 effect sizes and 240 million students, Hattie drew some crucial conclusions based on nurturing beliefs and values that impact on our thinking. He believes that how we think in schools constitutes ‘a set of principles that create mindframes to underpin our every action and decision’.² It is a belief that we are evaluators, change agents, adaptive learning experts and seekers of feedback about our impact, engaged in dialogue and challenge about learning. To be really effective in our role we see opportunity in error and are keen to spread the message about how powerful we can be as teachers and the impact that we have on learning. It is encouraging to realise that the most important aspect of being a great teacher is the way you think about your job! This is something we can all master by being determined to think purposefully in the way that works to make you the best teacher you can be.

² Hattie, *Visible Learning for Teachers*, p. 159.

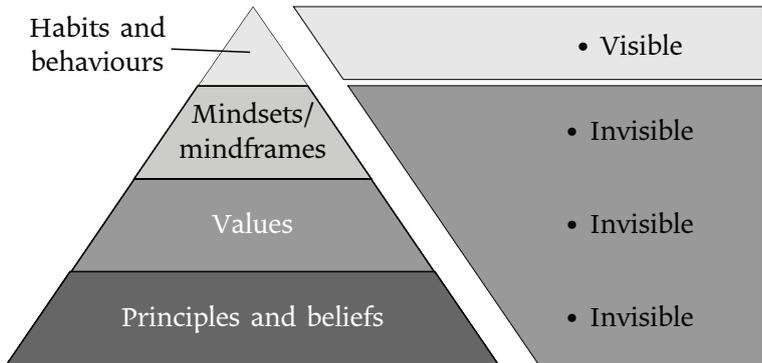
The (Practically) Perfect Teacher

So, what are the habits and behaviours of the most successful teachers? A quick survey of teachers on Twitter produced this Wordle:



Chapter 1

So where do all of these essential behaviours of the very best teachers come from? We all hold fundamental principles and beliefs, out of which come the values we believe to be important. From these, in turn, emerge our mindframes or mindsets (the ways in which we unconsciously think about the world and which affect our attitudes and actions). These attitudes and actions can then, in turn, become unconscious (but visible) habits and personality traits that can have a positive or negative effect on our performance.



We can, however, deliberately nurture positive, or growth, mindsets – and this is what this chapter is about. Metacognition: thinking on purpose about the way we think and see the world.

Frame your mind – using metacognition

Watch your thoughts, for they become words.

Watch your words, for they become actions.

Watch your actions, for they become habits.

Watch your habits, for they become character.

Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

Anonymous

Never underestimate the power of the principles, beliefs and values that rule your life because they constantly work away on your unconscious mind, creating thoughts, inner dialogue, vocabulary, behaviours, attitudes and sometimes fixed, inflexible mindsets that define who you are. Once they are fixed, or habitual, you don't even know they are there – but they form your personality and preferences, driving your unconscious mind to make choices and decisions.

Consider these statements (or ones more appropriate to you) and examine the beliefs that feed them, grow them and make them become a reality that is fixed. Challenge your fixed mindsets with questions like, 'Why am I thinking like that?' and 'How could I change that?'

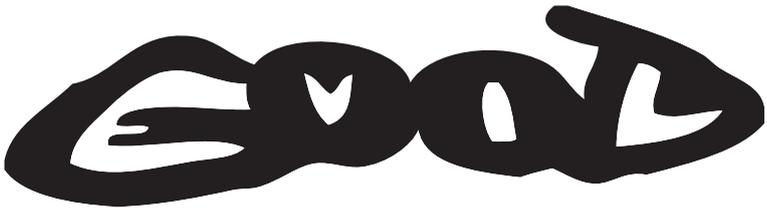
- I'm not really into computers.
- Meeting new people makes me nervous.
- I've never been good at maths.

Chapter 1

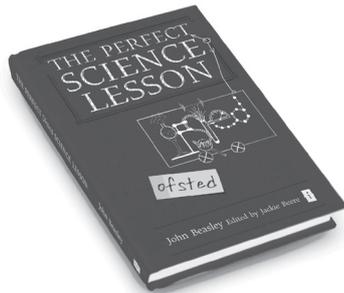
- I wouldn't dance at a party – let alone for the school panto.
- I'm always late – it's in my genes!
- I would never drive in London.
- I always panic during a lesson observation.
- Eating in company makes me nervous.
- I never want to stand up and speak in public.

By monitoring the micro patterns of activity in the frontopolar cortex, the researchers [at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences] could predict which hand the participant would choose 7 seconds before the participant was aware of the decision.³

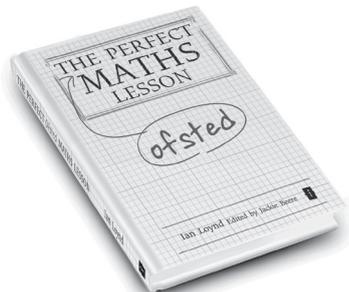
Our unconscious mind puts our own perceptual frame around everything we experience:



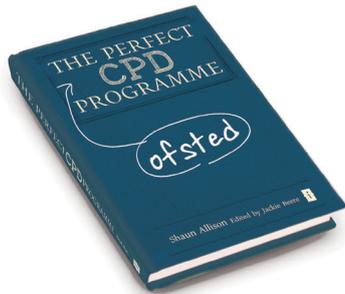
³ See <http://exploringthemind.com/the-mind/brain-scans-can-reveal-your-decisions-7-seconds-before-you-decide> (accessed 10 September 2013).



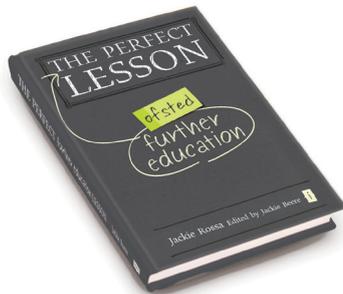
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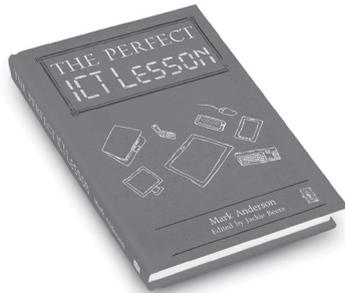
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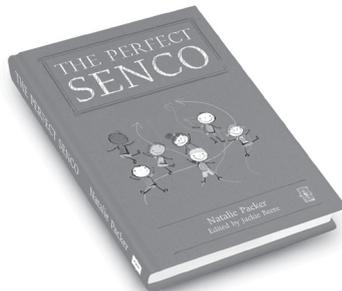
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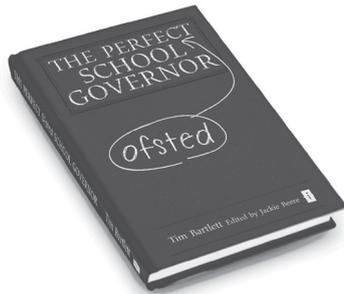
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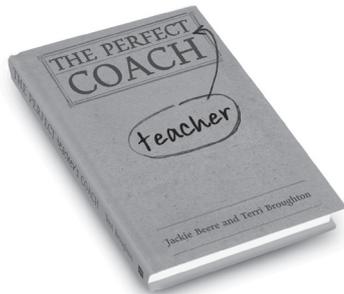
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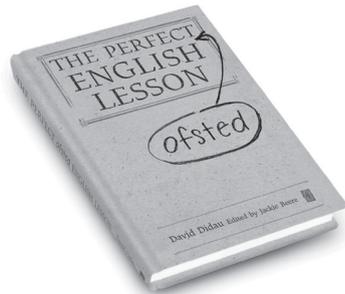
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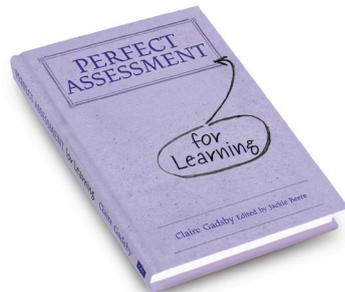
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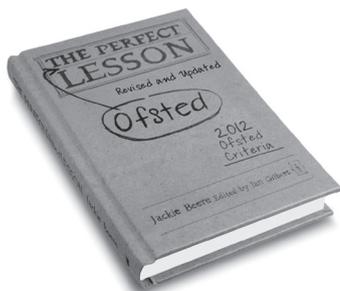
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THE **PRACTICALLY** PERFECT TEACHER

presents a pragmatic, practical guide to help you grow and flourish so that you can become the outstanding teacher who makes the difference between success and failure for the next generation. Expectations are high, time is short – prepare to be challenged and supported to be the best you can be.

“Jackie has produced an engaging book, full of a passionate belief in the satisfaction to be gained from the professional job of teaching. It oozes with sense, techniques to try and the joy of seeing young people learning.”

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Jackie Beere, the editor of the bestselling *Perfect series*, is a consultant trainer and School Improvement Partner, having been Head Teacher at Champion School, Northants. She spent three years as an Advanced Skills Teacher leading and implementing innovative teaching and learning initiatives. Jackie has been awarded an OBE for her services to education.



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