



IBSC Conference – Workshops

Stream 1

PSHE: Hope, Humour and Purpose: Getting RSE right for Boys

Phil Gaydon – Head of Character Education at St Paul's School, Rosie Ferris – Head of PSHE & Character Education at St Paul's Prep School, Rachel Turner – Head of PSHE at St Paul's School, Tyler John – Head of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion, Gideon Hammond – Pupil Lead for Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

Over the past five years, Relationships and Sex Education has undergone seismic changes in the UK. With the release of new statutory guidance and Labour's latest strategy to achieve their manifesto pledge to halve violence against women and girls in a decade being specialist teacher training on healthy relationships and consent education, it seems clear that the intense focus on RSE in schools is likely to continue.

However, as those who teach RSE to boys repeatedly report, we can often face “what-about-ism” when tackling these topics, walls of silence when we ask about things like positive male role models, or an uphill struggle to get boys to fully engage with topics and discussions that require emotional nuance and sensitivity. Yet boys aren't unemotional beings, they aren't simply wired to push back on anything that isn't about them, and they certainly aren't happy simply moving through life without role models or purpose. Conversely, they often feel deeply, they care about others and they are ready and willing to take up a cause.

So, how do we get RSE right for boys? What do we do to make sure they're engaged and moving in a positive direction – both for themselves and for society as a whole? In this workshop, five of St Paul's Prep and Senior School PSHE leads will reflect on the research and reporting around sex-based divides in RSE and boys' psychological and moral development, share some of their own insights from teaching a range of year groups, and then lead group discussions around some key questions that have emerged with a view to establishing immediately implemental strategies and approaches.

Note: This workshop will tailor its age focus to suit depending on the breakdown of the group.

Stream 2

Entrepreneurship: Equipping Boys to Build, Innovate and Lead

Nick Troen, Head of Entrepreneurship

These workshops will set out why entrepreneurship education matters now and how schools can lead in the absence of a clear national strategy in England. While devolved governments such as Scotland have embedded entrepreneurial learning through initiatives like Enterprising Schools, aligned with Developing the Young Workforce and the Curriculum for Excellence, England has yet to publish a standalone youth entrepreneurship strategy despite sustained calls from educators and industry. In response, St Paul's has developed its own award-winning entrepreneurship curriculum, Start It, recognised as Best of the Best for Entrepreneurship by The Week's Independent Schools Guide 2025. The session will focus in particular on entrepreneurship for boys, highlighting the importance of entrepreneurial mindsets and skills as a competitive advantage at a time when significantly fewer boys progress to higher education by age 19. It will also explore entrepreneurship as a powerful leveller, promoting equity, access and inclusion through collaboration across gender, socioeconomic and cultural differences, including successful joint teams from St Paul's and St Paul's Girls' School. Drawing on case studies and exemplars, the workshops will showcase the impact of strong school–industry–community partnerships, with insights from staff leading entrepreneurship at St Paul's, young founders who have come through the programme, experienced mentors from the Old Pauline community and demonstrations of practical approaches spanning senior and junior pupils, illustrating how entrepreneurial education can be embedded across the life of a school.

Stream 3

Research: Workshop 1 – St Paul's School Research Centre for the Education of Boys: Rethinking Boys' Literacy and Reading Culture

Stella Pryce, Deputy Director of the St Paul's School Research Centre for the Education of Boys and Hilary Cummings, St Paul's School Librarian

This research-led workshop addresses boys' literacy at a moment of growing urgency, whilst resisting simplistic narratives of deficit or crisis. International evidence consistently demonstrates the importance of reading for pleasure in supporting attainment and wider learning outcomes, yet recent data shows that boys' reading engagement is declining more sharply than girls', with the gender gap in daily reading and enjoyment widening, particularly amongst boys aged 11 to 16. At the same time, emerging findings suggest more complex patterns, including boys' slightly higher identification as social readers, pointing to forms of engagement that are not always captured by conventional measures. Framed as an inquiry rather than a diagnosis, the workshop invites an open, practice-led conversation about what flourishing literacy cultures for boys actually look like, and where even high-performing schools experience tension, fragility or unrealised potential. Drawing on St Paul's strong academic outcomes, rich literary traditions and everyday observations from its library and classrooms, the Research Centre positions itself as a convener of professional insight rather than a provider of fixed answers. Through shared provocations, structured dialogue and collaborative reflection, the session brings together practitioners to identify patterns, promising practices and persistent challenges across contexts, culminating in the co-creation of a future research agenda grounded in the lived realities of schools.

Research: Workshop 2 – The Foundation of a Research Centre: Action, Practice and Collaboration

Charles Irons, Director of the St Paul's School Research Centre for the Education of Boys

The St Paul's School Research Centre for the Education of Boys will open in Autumn 2026. Its incoming leadership team is in the process of discerning how to be as useful as possible to pupils at St Paul's and beyond. Whilst there is broad consensus on the cultural and academic challenges facing boys, structuring research about how better to close the achievement gap or cultivate healthy masculinities remains a challenge. This workshop seeks participants' input on two, related lines of inquiry. First, what traditional or action research, if any, have you conducted within your unique educational settings? To what extent have you focused on institution-specific challenges or tried to align your inquiries with larger questions facing the sector? Second, what areas of research do you consider most urgent? And what sort of collaboration would be most useful? Whilst we have a number of action research projects already underway that are inward-facing, we are also eager also to frame ambitious, multi-institutional projects promote the interests of boys everywhere.



Stream 4

Sport: What is the role of sport in boys' school education?

Gwyn Page – Director of Sport, St Paul's Prep School and Tom Vickers – Assistant Director of Sport, St Paul's School

This discussion-led seminar explores the vital role of sport within boys' schools, centred around three core pillars: Scholarship, Opportunity and Character. Through an interactive format incorporating live pupil voice and real-time audience engagement, delegates will be invited to reflect on how sport shapes culture, supports academic success, and develops young men of integrity and resilience.

The session will combine practical examples from current provision with a forward-looking vision for programme development. At its heart lies a key question: *What is the role of sport in boys' school education?* We will consider how sport provides a uniquely valuable environment in which pupils can experience challenge and failure safely, building character, broadening opportunity, and reinforcing the values that underpin long-term success.

Stream 5

The Arts: Workshop 1 – A Workshop Approach to Teaching Art in Year 9

Michael Grant – Head of the Creative and Performing Arts Faculty

Over the last five years, the Art Department at SPS has developed a workshop-based approach to teaching Year 9. The aim was to test and establish a curriculum built around short, fast-moving projects that place pupils directly into visual and physical problem-solving. Offering short bursts of focused activity has felt aligned to the boy's effective learning.

Rather than constructing long, extended projects that attempt to emulate a single creative methodology, these brief creative interventions build across the year to form a practical toolbox of methods, skills, and understanding. Central to all planning is the clear identification of a problem to be solved, providing structure to pupil engagement and embedding visual thinking within the act of making.

This workshop will review work and projects currently running in the department, exploring both the benefits and potential drawbacks of this approach to art education for boys. Participants will also take part in a colour composition workshop, demonstrating key ideas around planning and preparation that move pupils quickly into meaningful visual work. The session will offer opportunities for discussion about how the activity can be framed and structured to best support understanding, purposeful engagement, and creative confidence.

The Arts: Workshop 2 – Boys, Belonging and the Arts: Designing a Curriculum for Engagement and Expression

Holly Mazur – Head of Academic Drama

Teachers of the Arts know what powerful work boys can create when offered a nurturing and well-designed platform. Although the national picture shows girls continuing to outnumber and outperform boys in creative GCSEs, the benefits of cultivating the artistic voices of all young people are clearer than ever. This session will open with a talk from St Paul's Drama department, whose new approach of leading with concepts rather than skills has seen GCSE numbers triple in one year. Then, discussing the challenges in both state and independent classrooms, the opportunities arising from proposed changes to the National Curriculum and the changing social landscape for young men, we will explore how a creative curriculum can capture the minds of the broad church that is boyhood.
