

Community celebrations in challenging times [Editorial]

CARTER, Caron <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9280-6241>>

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Editorial

~~Title?~~ [Community celebrations in challenging times](#)

Welcome to Issue 2 of Volume 41 of *Pastoral Care in Education*.

At the time of writing, it is just a few days after the Coronation of King Charles III [in London](#). Many people were lining the streets to enjoy the occasion or participating in street parties [across the UK and further afield](#), connecting again with their community after Covid-19. Others felt less inclined to celebrate during a period of post-Covid recovery, a cost-of-living crisis, mass strike action and climate change concerns. The current context did raise the question: What do young people want on Coronation Day? McDowell (2023), found that suggestions included [wanting](#) teachers to be paid fairly, schools to be adequately funded and the climate crisis to be taken seriously. Supporting the pastoral care of children and young people needs both the opportunity for developing a sense of belonging within their community and addressing their contemporary concerns. The articles in this edition certainly cover community and contemporary issues, including developing 'societal resilience' during Covid-19 recovery, refugee experiences, behaviour and the impact on achievement, friendship, test anxiety and mental health awareness.

In the opening article of this [edition/issue](#), Penny Fogg explores the lessons that can be learnt from experiencing a national emergency like the pandemic. It draws upon a problem-analysis model, 'Interactive Factors Framework', applied to the experience of six primary school headteachers across systemic levels. The article outlines the care and education of children and young people at a local level during this period and identifies new knowledge for consideration with future pandemics or disasters. These include suggestions for short and long-term recovery plans for societal resilience.

This is followed by Lisa H. Papatraianou [&and](#) Al Strangeways' article that addresses an important and under-researched theme: understanding diverse refugee girls' resilience when transitioning between home and school cultures. The study drew upon a 'human resilience' framework aiming to listen to the voices of refugee students. Arts based methods were used to encourage participation, agency and to hear the diversity of student experience. The findings challenge normative/Western constructs of resilience, including the impact of resilience on a positive transition experience and the challenges encountered of moving across home and school cultures. The study recommends the importance of professional learning for teachers and whole school approaches for the future.

Behaviour and the impact on achievement continue to be priorities for schools. For many schools, this is certainly the case during this period of Covid-19 recovery that continues to impact on schools, children and often specific year groups. In article 3, Jeremy Swinson and Georgia Henderson report on a small-scale action research project which was focused upon supporting a school who had concerns about the behaviour and achievement of year eight pupils. The project concentrated on hearing the attitudes and opinions of children in Key Stage 3, aiming to listen to concerns, build trust, support wellbeing and improve outcomes. Delving deeper allowed for

causes of behaviour to be identified and the relevant action to be taken. Likewise, the action research dimension of this project allowed teachers to share their experiences, develop confidence and discuss possible solutions.

In article 4, Caron Carter places the lunchtime period under scrutiny and specifically the role of lunchtime welfare supervisors in supporting children's friendships. This is currently an under-researched area in the primary school context, but particularly important in the lives of children. This pilot study highlighted the strategies used to provide children with agency and scaffolding with their friendship experiences. Carter argues that the lunchtime welfare supervisor role is significant for nurturing children's friendships, therefore urging for greater attention, dialogue and reflection to be given to this period of the school day and the role of [lunchtime welfare supervisors](#) LWS.

In a week where concerns have been raised about the purpose and difficulty of SATs tests for Year 6 children, (Evans, 2023), this article by Dean [O'Driscoll](#) and Maria [MAcAleese](#) is timely. It explores the protective role of self-compassion on test anxiety amongst adolescents. [O'Driscoll and MAcAleese](#) note the value of self-compassion amidst a testing culture and performative education systems. In addition, they call for more positive and creative environments where children can demonstrate their achievement and reach their potential, thereby reducing anxiety and bringing a balance between wellbeing and mental health alongside academic achievement.

An innovative programme developed by the [cChaplaincy](#) at an Irish University is the focus of Bernadine Brady, [Charlotte Silke, Ben Hughes and Jimmy McGovern and her colleagues](#) in [the sixth](#) article-6. The aim here is to pay attention to the increasing rates of mental health issues in Higher Education by equipping fellow peers who would like to support. This article reports on the Seas Suas programme intervention that aimed to increase awareness and knowledge. Students experiencing this programme reported higher levels of empathy, social responsibility and confidence.

In the seventh and final article of this issue, Rebecca Geeson [and](#) Emma Clarke present an exploration of Teaching Assistant [\(TA\)](#) identity. Two data sets are drawn upon to foreground the TAs' voice, examining role definition and constructs of identity in the mainstream primary school context. The studies reveal that TA identity is multi-faceted and bounded by individual experience, context and relational factors. [Towards the conclusion, potential steps for schools suggest, In terms of recommendations, Geeson and Clarke suggest](#) planned appraisal and performance management for TAs, involvement in school life and policy creation and time to discuss and negotiate their roles with the teachers they work alongside.

References

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Caron Carter

Associate Editor, *Pastoral Care in Education*

Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield.

C.Carter@shu.ac.uk