

# ANOTHER YEAR OVER...

...and as a new one begins, Vic Goddard has been thinking about making a few resolutions

There is one particular thing that I said on 'Educating Essex' that still bothers me. It was a small comment that was probably ignored by everyone else apart from me, but still, I wish it hadn't been included in the final edit to be archived for posterity. I am sure that I am allowed to paraphrase myself; I basically say that, despite continuing to care about the year 11s that are leaving, my job is to care just as much for the next cohort. It's that 'next' bit at the end that bothers me, because it sounds like I'm taking the leavers' moving on lightly, and simply starting again with a fresh batch of young people (maybe that is just in my head). I obviously didn't mean it that way (I continue to have a good relationship with many of that year group two years after they left), but if I am honest, I do start thinking about the challenges that the new academic year will bring as soon as year 11 start their exams.

I think that most head teachers are probably in exactly the same position but we probably compound it by moving all year groups onto the new timetable at the end of June

rather than in September (great if you have a lot of year 7s but not so good for those that have a high number of year 11s). I am lucky that my governing body doesn't expect enormous school development plans, recognising the fact that every hour allocated to writing and beautifying a SDP means less time spent on working on the things we need to do right now to improve. A quick review of the three-year strategic plan, along with the SLT and other leaders telling the governors what their priorities are for the year, we have decided, is much more useful than pages and pages of planning sheets. From this point the governors talk through how they are going to monitor our progress to make sure that it allows them to discharge their duties – but thankfully refrain from forcing us to spend hour after hour writing reports that do not help improve the lives of our young people.

In the run-up to a fresh academic year, I like to go through the process of setting myself new (school) year resolutions; for example, this is an excellent opportunity to

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commit to finding the time to get to the gym regularly, thus giving me the chance to fail as comprehensively in September as I always do in January. And my promise to improve my work/life balance always has the same eventual outcome as the gym resolution, of course. Joking aside, though, thinking about my 'resolutions' is a useful exercise. It makes me reflect on how successful (or not) I have been in serving the children of Passmore's over the past year. I beat myself up about the times when I have spent far too long not interacting with the students by being bunkered down in my office and vow to get out and about around the school more. I have also now given up second guessing what fantastic new ideas the DfE/Secretary of State will have thought up over the summer break to make a priority for all schools, and just do what I think is right for OUR young people in OUR school.

With all that in mind, then, this is my personal list of new (school) year resolutions:

- Keep looking for the 'marginal gains' rather than the 'fireworks' change.
- Make sure the 'joy' and 'art' of teaching are at the forefront of all training opportunities and developmental conversations with staff.
- Whatever the latest pronouncements are from 'above', keep being brave enough to do what is right for the students not for the headlines.

I know these aren't dramatically life changing, but I will remember them and they will make me focus on what's important for the students of Passmore's. They are also not SMART or quantifiable and I am more than happy with that. I doubt whether the staff at Passmore's will realise that I am making a concerted effort about these things and that is how I would want it. No grandstand moments – just a relentless focus on the needs of our students and the development of the staff who have to deliver on a day to day basis.

What are your new (school) year resolutions? Feel free to share them with me through Twitter: @vicgoddard.

