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EUROPE'S FIRST ENGLISH-CHINESE PREP SCHOOL

WHEN I GROW UP...
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ENDURING TRADITIONS

FROM CEREMONIES & LANGUAGE TO UNUSUAL SPORTS

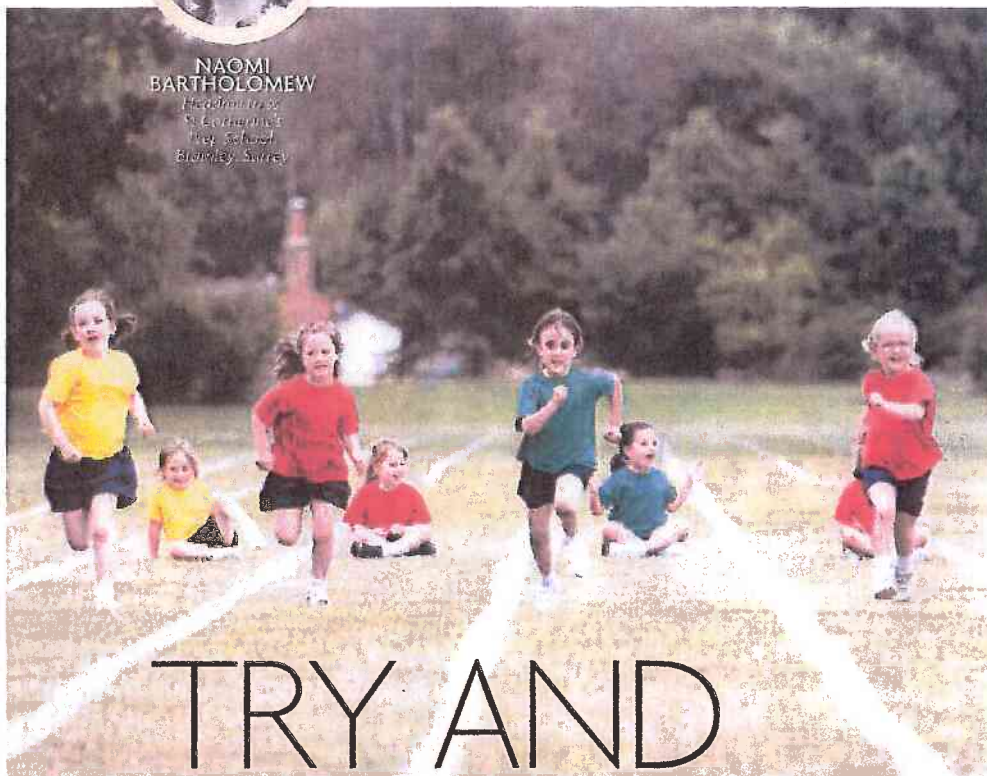
PLUS

- THINGS TO DO AT HALF TERM
- SKIING IN GSTAAD
- THE YORK HERO
- ROYAL HOSPITAL SCHOOL IN PICTURES
- BEHIND THE SCENES AT BEDALES





NAOMI BARTHOLOMEW
Headmistress
St Catherine's
Prep School
Bramley, Surrey



TRY AND TRY AGAIN

Naomi Bartholomew explains why children must learn to see failure as a stepping stone to success

Building resilience and helping children understand the importance of failure are hot topics amongst educationalists. We are all aware of the dangers of wrapping our children up in cotton wool, and the problems that lie ahead for those who have been sheltered from any sense of failing.

The journalist Melanie Phillips wrote about the dangers of rewarding every child and the need to ensure that we recognise true success (not simply awarding prizes to everyone) in her book, *All Must Have Prizes*. And Matthew Syed writes in *Bounce* of the success that can come through hard work, suggesting that those who spend 1,000 hours a year practising a skill will be successful. Both theories have their merits and flaws.

It is common sense that we all need to fail in order to succeed. Many will know of the example of Thomas Edison, whose most memorable invention, the light bulb, purportedly took him 1,000 attempts before he developed a successful prototype.

"How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" a reporter asked him. "I didn't fail 1,000 times," Edison responded. "The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps."

Young children are naturally curious and will be keen to experiment, so they should find joy in their LEGO tower falling to the floor and building it again.

But what about in schools? This is where we need to harness this natural resilience and curiosity, and allow young people the chance to fail in order to succeed. After all, avoiding failure is clearly life-limiting and results in fewer opportunities for growth.

Above, pupils at St Catherine's, Bramley compete at Sports Day

This said, we have to remember that in moments of failure there can be frustration and embarrassment. We must therefore be able to provide encouragement and support through any momentary wobbles, and give children the chance to learn from their mistakes when they face a similar challenge.

This requires strong relationships and a real understanding of what makes each child tick. We can all be sensitive at any one time for a number of reasons, but we shouldn't oversimplify it by assuming some are better at coping than others.

Here at St Catherine's, we believe that pupils should take considered risks, be gently taken out of their comfort zones and develop a respect for their own and others' talents. Encouragement is plentiful and wherever possible, we grab the chance to celebrate a magic moment of success, whether that be a certificate for learning to tie their shoe laces, or receiving a distinction in their Grade One violin exam. With the right blend of support and guidance, children can start to see failure as a stepping stone to success. ♥

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