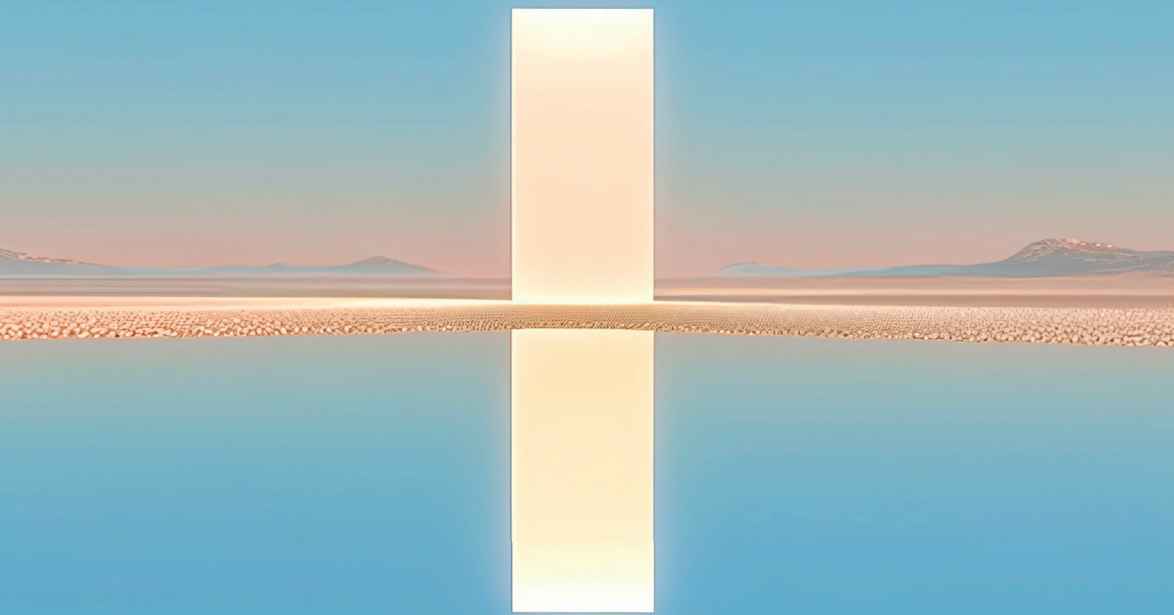


Andrew Marsh

Quiet Leadership

The Power of Introversion in Schools



Praise for *Quiet Leadership*

A deeply touching book for all current and aspiring school leaders who don't feel that they will ever stand out in such a loud, shouty profession. So many of Andrew's anecdotes resonate with me; someone always seems more confident, more articulate and better suited to success. However, he guides readers through a different way to lead – calmly, reassuringly, empathetically and quietly. There is no one way to be a successful leader – and Andrew's book demonstrates this perfectly.

Keziah Featherstone, Executive Trust Leader; former head teacher; co-founder and chair of WomenEd and co-chair of Headteachers' Roundtable

A fascinating and often counterintuitive insight into how a complex organisation can be lead and managed. A personal, thoughtful and thought-provoking examination of leadership from a different perspective.

Steve John, educational consultant at Involve Group, former local authority advisor and head teacher

Leadership tends to be dominated by the cult of personality and popularity. In a sector where headship is characterised by gravitas, charisma and other traits of extroversion, Andrew Marsh uses this book to provide insight into an alternative model: leading from behind.

Building upon his own personal experience as an introvert, Marsh uses this book to offer a personal meditation on leadership that is grounded in research and practical application. He highlights aspects of workplace phenomena that are biased towards extroversion – such as public speaking and networking expectations – and provides advice for fellow introverts and those wishing to be introvert allies.

The book offers an exploration of the importance of team dynamics and makes a case for achieving a balance of personality types within leadership teams. Marsh reflects on his own leadership experiences and on the importance of self-awareness and authenticity in place of the 'fake it until you make it' advice that those with introverted tendencies may be accustomed to.

Often in leadership confidence can trump competence. Busting the myth of shyness, Marsh illuminates the beneficial traits of introversion – such as thoughtfulness, patience and active listening – and makes a

case for channelling these attributes as leadership strengths demonstrated by calm, quiet determination and unflinching integrity.

This book offers practical tips for school leaders – for example, managing interview processes, meetings and training events to get the best out of everyone. He also offers advice regarding well-being and social anxiety.

Marsh stresses the importance of making school environments introvert-friendly for the benefit of our introverted students as well as adults.

**Helena Marsh, secondary head teacher,
member of the Headteachers' Roundtable and co-founder of WomenEd**

Quiet Leadership is a timely and deeply humane contribution to the conversation about what it truly means to lead well in schools. Drawing on lived experience and thoughtful reflection, Andrew Marsh dismantles the myth that charisma and volume are prerequisites for effective leadership. Instead, he offers a vision grounded in authenticity, presence and respect for the quieter strengths that too often go unnoticed.

This book is both practical and profound. There are moving stories and Andrew shows us that listening, reflection and careful thought are not signs of hesitation but of wisdom. *Quiet Leadership* is an important read for anyone who cares about education, people and the kind of leadership that nurtures rather than depletes. It's a gentle but powerful call to reimagine what strength looks like in our schools, and beyond.

Mary Myatt, founder of Myatt & Co

As an extrovert, I approached *Quiet Leadership* by Andrew Marsh aware that its perspective differed from my own. Rather than feeling distant, the book challenged, developed and ultimately enriched my understanding of leadership, influence and inclusive practice.

By combining research with examples drawn from people and contexts around the world, alongside practical school-based illustrations, Marsh grounds theory in the everyday realities of school life. His discussion of meetings, recruitment, CPD and classroom practice is informed by established thinking around introversion and organisational culture, giving his argument both depth and credibility.

Marsh shows how school leadership has been framed through extroverted expectations, often to the detriment of both children and staff. He demonstrates how schools can appear inclusive on paper while

continuing to marginalise quieter ways of thinking and contributing, particularly those grounded in reflection, listening and depth.

Marsh uses personal anecdotes with honesty and humility, inviting reflection rather than compliance. Even for leaders comfortable with outward-facing roles, the challenge is clear: what might improve if we paid closer attention to quieter forms of thinking and contribution?

The writing reflects the spirit of the book – measured, reflective and grounded in care for people. Ideas are given space to develop, rather than being pushed for effect. In doing so, *Quiet Leadership* offers not a fixed approach to leadership, but a broader and more humane lens through which to see it.

**Paul Urry, Head Teacher of St Stephen's CE Primary School (Bradford),
writer and podcaster at *From a Headteacher's Perspective***

Andrew Marsh

Quiet Leadership

The Power of Introversion in Schools



Crown House Publishing Limited
www.crownhouse.co.uk

First published by

Crown House Publishing Limited

Crown Buildings, Bancycfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK

www.crownhouse.co.uk

and

Crown House Publishing Company LLC

PO Box 2223, Williston, VT 05495, USA

www.crownhousepublishing.com

© Andrew Marsh, 2026

The right of Andrew Marsh to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2026.

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owners. Enquiries should be addressed to Crown House Publishing.

Crown House Publishing has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cover image © LiezDesigns - stock.adobe.com

Government documents used in this publication have been approved under an Open Government Licence. Please see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3>.

EU GPSR Authorised Representative

Easy Access System Europe Oü, 16879218

Address: Mustamäe tee 50, 10621, Tallinn, Estonia

Contact Details: gpsr.requests@easproject.com, +358 40 500 3575

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

Print ISBN 978-178583781-4

Mobi ISBN 978-178583800-2

ePub ISBN 978-178583801-9

ePDF ISBN 978-178583802-6

LCCN 2026932010

Printed in the UK by CMP, Poole, Dorset

Preface

I am hovering awkwardly in the corner of a function room at a golf club in the middle of rural Somerset. My reason for being there is unrelated to golf – a sport I have never been particularly drawn to. Somerset is a vast, highly rural county, and convening all the head teachers in one place is challenging, often resulting in meetings in unusual locations – hence my attendance here today.

I don't remember exactly why we were meeting on this particular occasion, but I do remember my lunch. It consisted of various beige snacks, including sausage rolls, quiches and slices of pizza, typical of such days.

The lunch in question is perched precariously on the paper plate that I am holding, and I am about to tuck in when a colleague approaches with an article he knows will interest me.

Sadly, I no longer have a copy of the article, but I remember that it was written to praise the leadership style of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, who was at that time the manager of Manchester United Football Club. Its focus was the difference between Solskjaer's style of management and that of the legendary Sir Alex Ferguson, and it championed the rise of the new manager's quieter, more empathetic style, which my colleague felt reflected my own model of school leadership.

Solskjaer was the manager of Manchester United for three years. On 21 November 2021, with the club seventh in the premiership, he was relieved of his duties. When I heard the news, I was struck by the similarity with what had happened to me earlier in my own career.

Unlike Solskjaer though, I was given time to reflect on and develop my leadership style. I knew that 'quiet leadership', at least as I had initially defined it, and as it was described in articles about Solskjaer, did not work. After learning some hard lessons and coming close to quitting, my own, more robust concept of 'quiet leadership' had developed.

Since Solskjaer's sacking, I have become more interested in the careers of other football managers, and followed them to see whether there were any further parallels with my own career. I read about Arsène Wenger, whose thoughtful, analytical style transformed football in the UK. However, he did not bring 'success' to his team to the extent that was expected of him. What about the most successful manager of the last ten years, Pep Guardiola? His success was primarily due to the

exceptional resources at his disposal, which is not something that can be said of most schools given the continued squeeze on our budgets over the past ten years. I also learned about Claudio Ranieri achieving unexpected success with Leicester. He was known as a master manager, taking all the pressure off his players so that they could focus on what they did best. His time was fleeting, though, and he was sacked a year after his most significant success. I read about Carlo Ancelotti, who also adopted the term 'quiet leadership', although his version was closer to the Alex Ferguson model than my own style.

None of their managerial stories truly reflected my own leadership journey, which is why I have written the book you are about to read. I have lived and breathed the model of quiet leadership that I will share with you and, even though it is closely aligned with my own introversion, I strongly believe that all leaders would benefit from adopting the approaches described in the following chapters.

Contents

Preface i

Acknowledgements iii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: There Is at Least One 'I' in Team, Probably More! 5

Chapter 2: Why Introverts Make Great Head Teachers 15

Chapter 3: Why Introverts (Can) Make Bad Head Teachers 23

Chapter 4: Introverted School Culture and Improvement 33

Chapter 5: Meetings for Introverts 45

Chapter 6: Recharging Our Batteries 55

Chapter 7: CPD for Introverts 81

Chapter 8: What Can We Learn from Other Introverts? 89

Chapter 9: Interviewing Introverts 97

Chapter 10: Children Can Be Introverts Too! 103

Chapter 11: Introverted Role Models for Children 109

Chapter 12: World Introvert Day 117

Conclusion 129

References 131

Introduction

It is a hot summer's day in 2007. I am sitting in an otherwise empty staffroom with two other people. We are awkwardly perched in a line on those low chairs all teachers are familiar with – the ones that are meant to make you feel relaxed but are actually impossible to sit on. I am wearing a suit and tie, which is unusual for me, and, along with the other two candidates – both smartly dressed women – I have just been interviewed for the post of deputy head teacher in an infant school.

The younger of the two women excuses herself, leaving just two of us waiting silently. The other turns to me and, out of nowhere, says, 'I think she' – meaning the woman who has just left the room – 'will get the job. She's really confident, and I am sure she would have blown them away', she continues. But her evaluation is cut short as the other woman returns. She was right; confidence was radiating from her, and I have no doubt she would have made a stronger first impression than either me or the other candidate.

Cut to a month later. Much to the surprise of the two other candidates, I was offered and took the job. I am now sitting down for a review with my chair of governors, an ex-teacher in her seventies, who was the person who actually made the offer. I thought things were going well, but I was floored by her opening comment. She informed me that she was worried that they had made the wrong decision, as she thought I was 'too quiet'.

.....

We move forward now to 2020. I am sitting down for a meeting with my new chair of governors. I have been head teacher at my school for nearly a decade, and I would consider myself to be 'experienced'. We are thriving, having just come through a good Ofsted inspection, and our numbers are growing, to the extent that we are one of the few oversubscribed schools in the area. Things are going well.

At the start of the meeting, I am completely taken aback by a comment that the chair makes. He is from the business world and is a very outgoing character, a 'typical' salesman. He looks me right in the eye and

explains to me that he feels I am not a 'people person', and that I need to get over this if I want to be a successful head teacher.

.....

I did not realise that I was an introvert for a significant part of my teaching career. I knew I was different from most of my colleagues, who seemed to thrive in situations I found overwhelming. But I didn't have a name for it. I remember at times wondering if I was somewhere on the autistic spectrum – but that was as far as I went with any type of self-diagnosis.

Even now, some 30 years after I completed my degree, the term 'workshop' causes my heart rate to increase and my palms to sweat. To put it mildly, I really don't enjoy being the centre of attention, and I am very happy with just my own company. Although I have developed some survival strategies throughout my career to help me manage my introversion, the idea of being put on the spot and asked to leave my comfort zone is still so alien to me that I have been known to shut down entirely, rather like the opossum does when it feels threatened by predators.

It is important to state at the start of this book, dear reader, that being an introvert is not the same as being shy, although the terms do overlap. Susan Cain, in her book *Quiet*, describes the terms as being 'cousins'.¹ There is a clear difference though: shyness is an emotion, while introversion is not; it is a personality type. The term was introduced by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung at the start of the twentieth century, and then written about in detail by him in his 1921 book *Psychological Types*.² In simple terms, he defined introverts as people who are more comfortable focusing inward than outward, and who gain their energy from this rather than from seeking out other people.

Over the years the definition of introversion has developed from Jung's original idea. It is now commonly accepted that introverts also process thoughts differently from extroverts, sometimes taking more time to respond, which can give the impression that we are not good at thinking on our feet. Introverts' reluctance to speak 'off the cuff' is mirrored in the fact that we tend to prefer writing over talking. It is precisely that skill that I am attempting to use in the writing of this book. Interestingly,

1 Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (New York: Penguin, 2012), p. 4.

2 Carl Jung, *Psychological Types (Collected Works of C. G. Jung): A Revision by R. F. C. Hull of the Translation by H. G. Baynes* (New York: Routledge, 1991 [1921]), p. 6.

I am also making good use, up to a point, of my ability to 'daydream' good ideas, which is another strength of the introvert.

Let me qualify that. I am doing most of my writing for this book as soon as I wake up in the morning, after I have made my first coffee of the day, as I seem to come up with better points if I write when my brain is warming up than if I try writing when I am having my afternoon slump.

While I was a head teacher, I used to joke that I wrote letters better than I spoke, and that I should communicate entirely in letter form! Actually, I was only half joking. As an introvert, I find social interactions with large groups physically tiring and often need breaks to recharge my batteries. Introverts are good listeners, though, and generally sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. So I am not unequipped for social situations.

Introversion is not a binary trait. It is not simply a case of everyone identifying as an extrovert or an introvert and then dealing with the issues that this creates. To use a term common to educationalists, a spectrum exists with extreme introversion at one end and extreme extroversion at the other; we are all somewhere in between. People sitting precisely in the middle are called 'ambiverts'; as you can imagine, they are rare. I am pretty close to the introverted end of the spectrum and, as demonstrated by the incidents I have already described, I have been managing my introversion for a long time.

Sadly, a significant section of our society still does not appreciate the potential of introverted leadership. This is undoubtedly true for schools, which is part of the reason why I am writing this book. In the following chapters, I will discuss how introversion made me an effective school leader, as well as the challenges it created for me. I will also write about the way in which our education system is set up to favour extroverts, and I will give some clear advice for levelling the playing field. I hope this book will educate people who might otherwise write off our potential as head teachers, as well as prove to a significant number of introverted readers that they can become excellent school leaders and, in many ways, even outperform their more extrovert colleagues!

Chapter 1

There Is at Least One ‘I’ in Team, Probably More!

At least, that is true when the ‘I’ stands for introvert. YouGov, the renowned internet-based market research and data analytics firm, carried out a ‘friendship study’ in 2021, which revealed that up to half of the population of the United Kingdom identifies as introverted.¹ This compares with around 44 per cent of Americans who identified as introverted in a similar YouGov study from 2016.² If you have met anyone from the United States, you will not be surprised that introverts are less common stateside than in the United Kingdom – although you might be shocked that the number there is so high!

Given the quiet, thoughtful nature of introverts, it is little wonder that the teaching profession is an attractive proposition for us. So, realistically, you are going to be managing quite a few of them in your role as head teacher, even if you are not one yourself. It will therefore pay to understand them a bit better than you perhaps do currently.

As I briefly mentioned in the introduction to this book, the term ‘introvert’ was popularised by the philosopher Carl Jung in the 1920s. The idea was further developed in the 1940s by Katherine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers, who wanted to share Jung’s theories with the wider population, believing that a better understanding of personality types would benefit society in numerous ways. Together, they developed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which is a test that questions and assesses against four aspects of personality. These four aspects are:

1. Where you focus your attention.
2. The way you take in information.

1 Milan Dinic, YouGov Friendship Study part one: close friends and broad group of friends, *YouGov* (16 December 2021). Available at: <https://yougov.co.uk/society/articles/38493-yougov-friendship-study-part-1-close-friends-and-b>.

2 Peter Moore, The introverted future of America, *YouGov* (17 October 2016). Available at: <https://today.yougov.com/society/articles/16765-introverted-america>

3. How you make decisions.
4. How you deal with the world.

Anyone taking the test is given a letter corresponding to one of two possible outcomes for each aspect, giving them a four-letter code for their personality type:

- Focus on the outside world (extrovert – E) or on internal thoughts (introvert – I).
- Take in information based on observable information (sensing – S) or by looking for patterns and possibilities (intuition – N).
- Make decisions more based on logical analysis (thinking – T) or through a more empathetic approach (feeling – F).
- When dealing with the world, preferring organisation (judging – J) or preferring flexibility (perceiving – P).

Therefore, the test might record a result of ISTJ, indicating that an individual is task-based, conscientious and reserved. Or it might report that the person taking it was ENFJ, suggesting that they are outgoing, enthusiastic and good at inspiring others in a team. In all, there are 16 personality types, eight of which correspond to introverted personalities and eight to extroverted personalities.

Helpfully, there are also single-word archetypes for each personality type, which somewhat simplifies matters. The following archetypes are taken from the *Simple Psychology* website:³

- ESTP (the entrepreneur).
- ESFP (the entertainer).
- ESFJ (the caregiver).
- ENFJ (the protagonist).
- ENTJ (the commander).
- ESTJ (the director).
- ENFP (the champion).
- ENTP (the debater).
- ISFJ (the defender).

³ Julia Simkus, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), *Simply Psychology* (20 October 2025). Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/the-myers-briggs-type-indicator.html>.

- INFJ (the advocate).
- ISTP (the crafter).
- ISTJ (the logistician).
- ISFP (the artist).
- INFP (the mediator).
- INTJ (the architect).
- INTP (the thinker).

There are other personality tests out there, although the pedigree and history of the MBTI have made it the go-to for most organisations. For comparative purposes, though, I am going to briefly look at another popular personality test: the Big Five.⁴ It is called the Big Five because it measures the taker's position on a spectrum of five personality traits. These are:

1. Openness.
2. Conscientiousness.
3. Extroversion.
4. Agreeableness.
5. Neuroticism.

As you can see, both tests use extroversion/introversion as a significant factor in defining personality types. So, having taken the Big Five test just now online, I am happy to report that I scored highest on agreeableness, which 'indicates a strong interest in others' needs and well-being'. My next highest score was on conscientiousness, which means that I 'set clear goals and pursue them with determination'. After that, we move down to neuroticism, which is still classed as high for me. The test describes me as 'sensitive and emotional'. I score highly again when we move down to openness. The only area I had a low score in was extroversion – so no surprises there!

The Big Five test gives much more detailed results, breaking down each of the five personality traits into sub-traits. So that might be more useful for someone on a personal level, but, in my view, the MBTI is more than enough for analysing team dynamics and composition. It goes without saying, though, that any results your team produces, from

4 See <https://bigfive-test.com/>.

whichever test you choose, need to be looked at through a 'reality' lens and not used to make significant decisions in isolation.

So, if the aim of the MBTI when it was created was to reduce conflict in society and therefore improve productivity, how can this be applied within the context of a school. And how, specifically, can we use this information to benefit our team, particularly its introverted members?

However, the question we need to answer before getting to this is whether we *want* to use a personality test on our staff. The use of such tests is now commonplace in the world of business, with around 80 per cent of the Fortune 500 biggest companies in the United States using personality tests on their employees.⁵ But it seems like a big step to do so in the same way in our schools.

I think we can, and should, look to get to this point. But we should consider it as our destination, and we need to be aware that, for some schools, this destination will be further away than for others. First and foremost, for anything like this to be adopted, it is essential that the right culture (see Chapter 4) exists and has been well established. Otherwise, the use of any personality tests will either result in no impact on the school or, in the worst-case scenario, it may even harm the effectiveness of the organisation.

If you feel your school is not at a point where you are ready to engage with this fully, I suggest that you at least start by completing one of the tests yourself to see what insights it gives you into your own leadership style. Even before you take the test, you can probably guess quite confidently which personality type it will say you are – although I guarantee that you will find the increased self-awareness that completing the test will bring rewarding. Taking one was certainly very helpful for me, as I was able to spot areas where I might make bad choices, and hopefully avoid them. As well as your own personality type, I imagine that you are already thinking about the make-up of the team or teams that you work with, and how this has impacted your relationships with them. In my career, I have worked in teams with too many 'entertainers' and teams with too many 'debaters': you can imagine the different types of chaos that caused!

Today, I am a mediator (INFP). I qualified that statement by acknowledging that these kinds of tests depend to a certain extent on how you

⁵ Vanessa Leikvoll, 80% of Fortune 500 companies use personality tests, but are they ethical?, *Leaders* (14 September 2022). Available at: <https://leaders.com/articles/business/personality-tests/>.

feel when you take them. I would not expect my result to change much if I took the test tomorrow, but I probably would not complete it precisely as I did today. Quite frankly, I am not surprised to find that the test has reinforced my comment in the introduction to this book that I am pretty near to the most extreme end of introversion.

Only when the school's leadership judges that the culture is strong enough to benefit from personality testing of staff should any such tests be used. At that point, it is essential to follow clear protocols on confidentiality and data storage, so that staff can give fully informed consent before taking part. If in any doubt, seek guidance from your data protection officer (DPO).

Two further caveats are needed before engaging with personality testing:

1. As already mentioned in relation to my results, the results of any test should not be considered as anything other than how the recipient answered on that day. Obviously, one would expect the results to be valid and reflect the personality of the taker. However, the results may not be identical if they take it again on another day.
2. For this reason, personality tests should not be used to make decisions in the recruitment process. You can use them to help build up a picture of candidates, but they must not be used to break a tie.

OK, let's assume a situation where the staff culture has been deemed to be strong enough to cope with personality testing. What are the benefits of using it in schools?

Well, in an already supportive culture, the results of these tests can help create stronger links within the team through an increased understanding of how your colleagues see the world. Individuals are able to adapt their behaviour in light of an increased awareness of their colleagues' personality types, leading to greater organisational success.

From the introvert's point of view, we are often misunderstood by others; the idea of being able to talk about why we might appear shy, disinterested or grumpy is incredibly empowering. The same works in reverse too. As is typical of introverts, I find extroverts quite tiring at times. Having an open discussion with them about their world view would help me get over my occasional lack of patience with their full-on extrovert personalities!

But remember, we can't just consider introverts as a group of people with identical personality types. We already know that the MBTI identifies eight different types of introverts – which is a lot, isn't it? Thankfully, more research has now been done on the different ways in which introverts can be understood. I want to share two research-based models, each describing four easy-to-understand types of introvert.

Model 1 – the STAR model

The four types of introverts in this model are social introverts, thinking introverts, anxious introverts and restrained introverts:⁶

1. Social introverts are those who prefer smaller groups to large crowds, and are particularly comfortable with solitude.
2. Thinking introverts are the most thoughtful and creative type of introverts. They are the biggest 'dreamers'.
3. Anxious introverts differ from social introverts as they actively avoid large crowds, which make them feel uneasy or self-conscious.
4. Restrained introverts sit back and observe in new situations, but come out of their shells when they feel more comfortable.

One might identify as being more closely aligned to one of these archetypes, although each of the characteristics may also be present within a single introvert. As a school leader, one would therefore manage these four types of introverts differently. For example, you would be more inclined to send thinking or restrained introverts to conferences or networking sessions than you would anxious or social introverts. Or, at the very least, you would try to send an anxious introvert with a buddy. You should also make sure to involve your thinking introverts in as much strategic development work as possible, as they will be the ones with the best ideas! Anxious introverts and restrained introverts obviously

6 Jennifer O. Grimes, Jonathan M. Cheek and Julie K. Norem, Four meanings of introversion: social, thinking, anxious, and inhibited introversion (paper presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX, January 2011). Available at: https://scottbarrykaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Introversion_4_domains_SPSP_2011_Grimes__Cheek___Norem-libre.pdf. Grimes et al. use the description 'inhibited', rather than 'restrained', introversion, but the STAI Model doesn't sound as good, if you ask me!

require a special level of care. But, if you are prepared to put in the work, their potential is incredible.

Model 2

The 'four types of introverts' model has also been aligned with MBTI by Noemi Akopian, who has grouped each of the eight introvert types into pairs:⁷

1. INFP and INSP are grouped to become 'Introspective Introverts'. They are empathic, thoughtful and creative.
2. ISTJ and ISFJ are grouped to become 'Nostalgic Introverts'. They are responsible, organised and down to earth.⁸
3. INTP and ISTP are grouped to become 'Analytical Introverts'. They are your logical, critical thinkers.
4. INTJ and INFJ are grouped to become 'Contemplative Introverts'. They are the rarest kinds of introverts, the wisest, most profound thinkers.

As with model 1, understanding which type of introvert(s) you are working with allows you to adapt your management style accordingly to achieve the best possible outcomes for each introverted staff member.

Once you have classified your introverts, releasing their potential can only be done if you provide the conditions they need to thrive. So you owe it to them to identify them as soon as you can. You should be able to do this without testing them, as you are an introvert and will see yourself in them. So testing should just be used to prove that your intuition was correct.

Remember, it is not just a case of you recognising a fellow introvert; you need to establish a culture where all staff understand the specifics of the introvert personality. Otherwise, you will simply be firefighting failing relationships, which is incredibly undermining for the success of the organisation.

7 Noemi Akopian, The four types of introverts in MBTI, *Medium* (17 May 2022). Available at: <https://medium.com/clear-yo-mind/the-four-types-of-introverts-in-mbti-48aa65c11d0e>.

8 Just to note, the term 'nostalgic introverts' is of particular interest to me as I have identified being nostalgic as one of my key introvert well-being strategies (see Chapter 6).

Personality type analysis can also be extremely useful when building teams within a school. I initially worked as a teacher in a school with 16 classes. So we spent more time in year group meetings than whole staff meetings. In a school that size, it would seem a bit of a no-brainer that you wouldn't want a year group full of dominantly extrovert teachers – a year group full of introverts would be a nightmare too, albeit for different reasons! Building cross-age phase teams, for example, to tackle a specific curriculum subject, would also be more likely to be successful if personality types were at least considered in staff selection.

There is no magic formula for creating the perfect group. Even if there were, using it would be impossible, because every setting has a unique group of personalities to work with. What we can do, though, is look at the research on both conflicting and complementary personality types. Although we absolutely should not be reducing a member of staff to a four-letter code, it is difficult to argue that a greater understanding of these would not be beneficial in terms of conflict resolution.

Conflicting personalities

It is important to state at the outset that it is not as simple as introverts and extroverts not getting along in a team. There are many cases of great relationships, both professional and personal, between the two. As an example, in the chapter on introverted role models (Chapter 11), I write about American Supreme Court Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was close to the introverted end of the personality spectrum and yet was happily married for over 50 years to a partner who was very much at the other extreme.

Although it is not an exact science, psychologists have identified that differences in the final two letters of an MBTI personality type are central to understanding where conflict is likely to occur. The Myers-Briggs Company refers to these differences as the 'conflict pairs'.⁹ This is because the third letter specifies whether you make decisions based more on facts or feelings, meaning that those with an 'F' in their type are more emotional than their more rational 'T' colleagues. When this is combined with the fourth letter, which identifies whether you are more

9 *MBTI, Myers-Briggs personality type and conflict – what causes fights between MBTI types?* (19 May 2021). Available at: <https://www.mbtionline.com/en-US/Articles/mbti-type-and-conflict>.

organised and judge situations 'J' or whether you are more flexible and perceive things 'P', you get a good understanding of what aspects of their personality an individual will tend to exhibit in interactions with those around them.

If we take our single-word definitions of personality types and group them based on the last two letters of their MBTI code, we are left with four very different sets of introverted personalities:

- TJ: Logistician, Architect (this group does not like processes to be challenged).
- FJ: Defender, Advocate (this group wants relationships to remain strong but doesn't like challenges to their deeply held beliefs).
- TP: Crafter, Thinker (this group sees conflict as a waste of time and believes in trust and values credibility).
- FP: Artist, Mediator (this group wants to hear everyone's views and doesn't like deeply held beliefs to be challenged).

There is unlikely to be conflict within each group, so one might feel that teams should be composed in this way if possible. It is also easy to see how conflicts might occur between different groups: TJs, for example, are likely to find working with more free-thinking extroverts particularly challenging, as might FJs when working with extroverts who are less bothered about ruffling feathers.

However, the intention of identifying where conflict pairs exist within your team is not to avoid them but to anticipate them so that they can be worked through. The mixing of the four conflict pairs can be an extremely positive strategy, as different perspectives within a team are often welcomed and valued. In fact, a team made up of individuals from the same group are likely to be less effective than a group with *some* mixing. I can't believe I am writing this as an introvert, but conflict is not always a bad thing!

While personality testing can be especially valuable for managing potential conflicts and bringing out the best in introverted staff, it is important to consider its use separately for the senior leadership team (SLT), and in particular for the relationship between head teachers and their deputies.

As an introverted head teacher, it is vital that your deputy understands and respects your personality quirks. I would not advocate for all members of the SLT to be of the same personality type (see the previous

comment about conflict not always being a bad thing). But in an ideal situation, your deputy would be as close as possible to being an ambivert personality type. This would likely mean that they would have some aspects of an introverted personality, which would make it easier for them to understand you, while also giving them some extrovert tendencies to ensure that appropriate challenge exists in your relationship. I have written in more detail about the head teacher/deputy relationship in an article in the online magazine *Headteacher Update*.¹⁰

If you are at all concerned as a head teacher that your personality type might cause issues for your relationships, it is essential to be open and honest about the way that your brain works, as that will reduce the chances of clashes occurring. As an introverted leader you must also be able to stick to your guns; after all, the buck stops with you. In my view, it is impossible to have a thriving school without a strong and positive relationship existing among the SLT. So it is vital that the effort is put into making this work.

¹⁰ Andrew Marsh, The most important relationship in your school: working with your deputy headteacher, *Headteacher Update* (4 June 2025). Available at: <https://www.headteacher-update.com/content/best-practice/working-with-your-deputy-headteacher>.

Whether you're an aspiring leader unsure whether your quiet, thoughtful nature is 'enough' for the role, or you're already in post and looking to lead in a way that feels authentic, this book is a supportive and inspiring guide to embracing your unique strengths as an introvert.

In a culture that celebrates loud, charismatic or dominant leaders, introverts are often told they don't fit the mould for successful head teachers. But Andrew Marsh argues that quiet, thoughtful leaders can be just as effective, and that introverts bring a unique skillset to the role.

Drawing on nearly two decades of practical experience as a head teacher, he shows how introverts can thrive in school leadership roles because of their introversion, not despite it.

Essential reading for all current and aspiring school leaders.

A gentle but powerful call to reimagine what strength looks like in our schools, and beyond.

Mary Myatt, founder of Myatt & Co

Often in leadership confidence can trump competence. Busting the myth of shyness, Marsh illuminates the beneficial traits of introversion.

Helena Marsh, secondary head teacher, member of the Headteachers' Roundtable and co-founder of WomenEd

A personal, thoughtful and thought-provoking examination of leadership from a different perspective.

Steve John, educational consultant at Involve Group, former local authority advisor and head teacher

Quiet Leadership offers not a fixed approach to leadership, but a broader and more humane lens through which to see it.

Paul Urry, Head Teacher of St Stephen's CE Primary School (Bradford), writer and podcaster at *From a Headteacher's Perspective*

A deeply touching book for all current and aspiring school leaders.

Keziah Featherstone, Executive Trust Leader; former head teacher; co-founder and chair of WomenEd and co-chair of Headteachers' Roundtable

Recently retired from headship, **Andrew Marsh** has over thirty years' experience in education and nearly twenty in school leadership. He's worked mainly in small primary schools and, as well as leading his own school, he's assisted his LEA with acting head teacher positions, helping other schools that were in crisis.

 www.crownhouse.co.uk

ISBN-13: 978-178583781-4



9 781785 837814

Educational administration and organisation