

ASSOCIATE

## DR MATTHEW MCFALL

*“Two words sum up what schools should do more of to improve - cultivate wonderment!”*



*“A Cabinet of Curiosities is a room, a display, or a box dedicated to the weird and the wonderful. It is a place for discovery, connection, meaning, and mystery” - The Little Book of Awe and Wonder*

What would be the effect on learning and motivation if you focussed less on teaching knowledge and more on developing curiosity and wonder in your learners? And, for that matter, what is wonder, what does it feel like to do it and why wonder, anyway?

These are questions that are vexing the quite extraordinary mind of one of Independent Thinking's most magical – Associates.

Many schools pay lip service to the idea that curiosity, wonder and magic can improve motivation for learning. Dr Matthew McFall is proof - living and academic proof – that such approaches really do work.

Probably the world's only school-based 'Agent of Wonder', Matthew's research is all about strategies and structures that generate wonder and curiosity and their effect on engagement and learning. Whether it is the creation of the awesome 'Wonder Room' in what was effectively a large cupboard in an inner-city school to a full scale 'Wonder Maze' ('Every school should have one' – The Guardian) to school trails of philosophical questions to 'Cabinets of Curiosities' full of magic and wonder, Matthew has the experience to show how all schools can use such ideas to enhance learning and

motivation, the academic research to back it up and the flair as a presenter to help schools make their own magic real.

It has led to the design of the Wonder Box system – a sequence of playful and unexpected devices designed to surprise, engage, and initiate quests for wonderful objects, artefacts, and experience.

Hooked on conjuring since he received his first magic set at the age of four, Matthew's love of the art and craft of magic has led to a range of unusual commissions and inventions including Wonder in Carbonland for the Royal Society and Cabinet of Tiny Curiosities for Nanoworlds at the Cambridge Festival of Ideas in 2008.

Other research currently vexing him includes 'Histories of Trickery' and 'Conjuring Apparatus and Analogue Ingenuity'.

He is also an authority on lichen...

And for someone with an interest in the macabre it is perhaps suitable that Matthew has also been a ghost writer and has even written obituaries including one for Yvonne Kapp, the celebrated biographer of Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor for The Independent.

In 2013 Matthew was awarded the distinction of being an "Amazing Person in Education" by The Department of Education.

Feedback from recent events:

*“Thank you again for such an inspirational morning yesterday. You really fired everyone up and I've seen all sorts of interesting things appearing and happening today”*

*“You were simply outstanding today - a breath of fresh air”*

**Books written by Matthew McFall:**

- *A Cabinet of Curiosities: The Little Book of Awe and Wonder*
- *There is Another Way* (contributor)
- *The Working Class* (contributor)

See our website:  
[www.independentthinking.co.uk](http://www.independentthinking.co.uk)  
for more information.

Matthew has been with Independent Thinking since 2009.

All Independent Thinking Associates are DBS checked.