

FINISHING YOUR PROJECT

The checklist by Observer sub-editor and Shine Deputy Chair Katherine Whitbourn

Many of you are at the point where you are finishing your Shine Awards project off and hopefully getting ready to submit your entry.

My job is as a sub-editor on The Observer newspaper, so I am one of the last people to see the pages before they go to print.

Using tips I've gleaned from my own work, I wanted to give you a checklist as you complete your project:

1. **Have you got a good blend of articles, photos and artwork?** A good mix of light and serious pieces? Does all the text fit and not drop off the end of the page?
2. **Are all the pages numbered?** If you have a table of contents, do the page numbers match up?
3. **How are the headlines looking?** Do they entice the reader into the article? Again, have you got a mix of different tones of headlines? You can have all kinds: funny, serious, thought-provoking, puns. Questions are good, especially if it's a comment or opinion article. Starting with a 'why' or 'how' can be a great way to intrigue the reader. Sometimes the main headline is just a few words so have you got a subhead that explains the story a bit more? If you can, try not to repeat the words or ideas from the main headline in the subhead, but use it to take the article forward.
4. **How are you illustrating the story?** Photos? Graphics? Drawings? A cartoon? If it's a photo, have you got permission from those in the picture to use it? Schools have different policies on the use of photographs of pupils, so do check what yours is. Have you got a caption explaining what is going on in the photo? Does it relate to the text?
5. **Have you got good variety in the look of the individual pages?** Think about the visual interest - if the text is quite long there is a danger it can get 'slabby', so consider breaking it up with a pull quote - where you take a section of the text and drop a quote in the middle of the text in larger type and/or a different colour - that encourages the reader to keep on reading.
6. **Spellings.** When you're proofreading it's very easy to get so involved checking the spellings and grammar in the text that you don't notice there is a huge spelling error in the headline. Your eye just skips over it. It's quite a good idea to tick all the elements of a page as you go through it to make sure you've looked at everything. Make sure your corrections don't increase the length of the text and make words fall off the end.
7. **If you can't get your publication completed, have you got an amazing article/photo you wanted to submit?** Done is better than perfect!