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NEWS

School-led 'super hub' aims to ease MFL crisis

SOPHIE SCOTT

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Exclusive

A "super" school-led scheme to train language teachers is the latest government plan to ease staff shortages.

Schools Week understands teaching schools and universities have been approached to create a "super SCITT" [school-centred initial teacher training].

The government would encourage teaching schools, of which there are more than 600, to focus on training language teachers.

The National College for Teaching and Leadership has asked universities if they would support the teaching schools.

More modern foreign language (MFL) teachers are needed with the planned introduction of the compulsory English Baccalaureate (EBacc), in which every pupil currently in the first year of secondary school must study English, maths, science, history or geography and a language until they are 16.

The government wants at least 90 per cent of pupils across the country to sit these subjects. Currently, just 39 per cent do.

Meeting this demand will require an extra 3,500 language teachers, according to research from Education Datalab.

But in the past four years the government has failed to meet its recruitment target for language teachers. In 2015, one in ten places was unfilled.

In response, the Department for Education has set up multiple teams to look at what can be done to improve take-up.

A government spokesperson said its white paper was "committed to supporting the expansion of SCITT-led training" and there



Becky Allen

was a "particular focus on covering priority subjects".

He added: "We are looking at the possibility of new subject-specific ITT hubs and will announce more in due course."

So far the idea has received a lukewarm reception, especially from universities, that have criticised the government policy to move to school-led training.

But despite government incentives to the contrary, universities are still the preferred training route for language teachers. Last

year, 62 per cent of trainees were on a higher education route. Just 80 people started their training with a SCITT, 6 per cent of the overall total.

A university source told *Schools Week* that while their organisation wanted to be involved in a language hub they would need to make investments in staff. However, uncertain conditions around funding meant that they did not know "from one year to the next" if new people could be employed.

Becky Allen, Datalab director and author of the original research into language teachers, said the super-hub would only help "if the constraints in the market were the supply of training places, rather than the pool of potential trainees".

She added: "My concern is that there are insufficient graduates who are willing to train to become language teachers. The SCITT would not address this."

Allen said a simpler way to increase the number of language teacher trainees would be to raise the number of places available for trainees at universities. Last year they were only granted 88 per cent of the places they requested, with other places reserved for the less popular school-based training routes.

Leora Cruddas, director of policy at the Association of School and College Leaders, welcomed moves to increase the supply of language teachers and offered to work with the government to improve the situation.

"There is a severe shortage of teachers in these subjects, as there is in general, and this will become an even more pressing issue in the near future because of the government's EBacc target.

"It is absolutely essential that urgent action is taken now to come up with solutions."

Two more expert groups sneak under the radar

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Investigates

The government has commissioned two more expert review groups, despite its delay in publishing a number of other reports.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, has asked the Teaching Schools Council (TSC) to review modern foreign languages pedagogy in secondary schools and effective teaching practices in primary schools.

The reviews were announced in April and come as the department is under pressure to publish a number of other reviews.

Eleven expert review groups have been launched since Nicky Morgan took over as education secretary in July 2014.

But findings for just four – three of which were all related to the workload challenge – have been published. The other, on assessment without levels, was published two months late.

The new reviews mark a different approach with the TSC, a group that represents teaching schools and system leaders, commissioned to lead the projects.

The Department for Education (DfE) said it would only offer "additional support", which would include administrative help such as offering space for meetings and helping to

commission research.

However, *Schools Week* understands Gibb has influence over who will join the review. The DfE has denied this.

The TSC said Dame Reena Keeble, an education consultant and retired primary head, will head the primary review. Ian Bauckham, an executive headteacher and former president of the Association of School and College Leaders, will lead the modern foreign languages review.

A TSC spokesperson said: "Both Ian and Dame Reena have a wealth of relevant experience and we are delighted to be working with them on such important and timely pieces of work."

Both reviewers will work with schools, teachers and other experts before delivering their findings in autumn, the spokesperson added.

The modern foreign languages (MFL) review comes during a delicate time for the subject. The government wants 90 per cent of pupils to sit the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), which includes a language.

However, the pressure is on to deliver 3,500 extra teachers to meet the increased demand. This follows the department's failure to meet its recruitment target for language teachers for the past four years.

Bauckham told *Schools Week* he wanted the review to help to spread good quality language teaching.

In response to concerns over additional involvement from Gibb, he said: "I am completely in control of the people we are speaking to.

"The minister is very committed to modern foreign languages – it's part of the EBacc. We know this is something he is passionately in favour of."

The review falls under Gibb's ministerial portfolio. But a DfE spokesperson said: "The TSC is an independent body that we have asked to carry out a review of foreign language pedagogy. This work is independent of government, any suggestion to the contrary is incorrect."

Schools Week revealed last week how two of the three expert groups set up before the election have yet to be published, despite promises they would be released by "early 2016".

Three other reports commissioned last summer – two into behaviour training, and one on the assessment of special needs pupils – are still without a timeframe for publication.

The government also refused to publish an expert group's report into standards for teaching assistants.

NEWS

Government sets out its education agenda for 2016

FREDDIE WHITTAKER CONTINUED
@FCDWHITTAKER FROM FRONT

Laws forcing schools to promote the National Citizen Service, take more responsibility for excluded pupils and to become academies in areas where councils are "underperforming" and "unviable" were announced in the Queen's Speech on Wednesday.

The speech, which marked the opening of a new parliamentary session, set out the government's legislative agenda for education over the next year and confirmed several earlier announcements about the direction of education policy.

A plan, named by the government as the "Education For All" bill, proposes it "move towards" a fully academised system by targeting schools for forced conversion based on their council's performance or financial viability, a compromise on initial plans to force all schools to convert by 2022, which were dropped in the face of opposition from backbench Conservative MPs.

The new National Citizen Service bill will give schools a duty to promote the service. Launched by David Cameron in 2010, it combines residential trips and voluntary work during the school holidays for 16 and 17-year-olds.

Schools will have to report back to the government; it is not yet known how they

will be penalised if they fail to tell pupils about the service.

Detail on the academy plans, and how the Department for Education will define underperformance or unviability in councils, is awaiting formal consultation and a vote in parliament.

Information distributed after the speech said councils would have to "facilitate" academy conversion, making it "swifter and smoother" for schools.

But the Local Government Association, which represents councils, has remained vocal in its opposition to forced academisation, and said schools should "have the choice" on whether to convert.

Russell Hobby, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, also expressed doubts, claiming the academies plan could prove to be a "distraction from what really matters".



The bill will also change the law so schools will remain accountable for the education of excluded pupils and be held responsible for finding them alternative provision, but the logic of introducing such a requirement when school budgets are already stretched has been questioned.

The change will seek to end trusts excluding pupils to change the profile of their intake and boost results, a practice revealed in a report by the Centre for High Performance.

Under the current system, pupils excluded from schools become the responsibility of the alternative provider they are placed with, but the government wants to make sure that schools retain

responsibility for pupils until they find another place – with their performance while in alternative provision reflected in their original school's results.

Mary Bousted, the general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said school leaders were "already under intense pressure which is driving many from the profession", adding: "Without enough appropriately qualified staff, any reforms are unlikely to work."

Questions remain over how schools will be held to account for their new duties, but more detail is expected to be set out when the bill is tabled later this year.

David Laws, the former schools minister and current executive chair of CentreForum think tank, said the proposal should help to remove the "bad incentive" for schools to remove lower-performing pupils to improve league table performance, but warned that "careful thought" needed to be given to the practicalities of the policy.

"There may be limits to the amount of time where responsibility is appropriate, and schools have to have the ability to access and influence good alternative provision providers. There is no point in penalising schools for education that they cannot reasonably influence," he said.

Another element of the bill will be the introduction of a national funding formula.

Jon Yates profile, page 12

KEEPING A WATCH ON EXAM CHEATS

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

Teachers should be on high alert for technology-aided cheating during this summer's exams after a scam involving cameras and smartwatches was uncovered in Thailand.

The scam, discovered during medical school entrance exams at Rangsit University in Bangkok, involved three students filming their test papers using tiny cameras in their glasses.

They then sent the images to an outside team, who sent the correct answers to the smartwatches of three other students taking the exams.

Ownership of smartwatches in the UK has more than doubled this year, from about 340,000 to 720,000, according to latest YouGov figures, and use of the wearable technology has been a growing concern for schools.

Last May, Billericay school in Essex banned the watches from exam halls to ensure students could not use them to cheat.

North Nottinghamshire college went a step further and barred students from wearing any watch during exams so they could not access the internet through a smartwatch.

Such devices are already banned by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) for A-levels and GCSEs.

Last year, the body issued guidance for



schools that candidates should be stopped from taking "any potential technological/web-enabled sources of information" and specifically "any wristwatch that has a data storage device" into exams.

A JCQ spokesperson said that "intentional cheating is very rare" and that schools and colleges have a "duty at all times to maintain the integrity of exams", including reporting any malpractice.

Schools therefore must tell students what is and is not allowed in exam rooms.

"A candidate found in possession of anything used for cheating – like these watches – would be reported to the awarding organisation whose examination was affected," the spokesperson added.

Anyone reported can be disqualified from the exam or from receiving an overall qualification.

The students involved in the Thailand incident have since been banned by the Medical Council of Thailand, preventing them from becoming doctors even with private college or overseas credentials.

A further 3,000 students, who were sitting the same papers, are to retake the tests.



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NEWS

Boards approve changing shape of academies

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

Regional schools commissioners have approved nearly 20 applications for academies to up their pupil numbers or expand their age range.

Recently released decision notices show that headteacher boards considered 24 applications for academy expansions during meetings from January 16 to February 15.

Ten applied to expand their pupil admission numbers. Of those, seven were given the green light and three were deferred. More applied to expand their age range, with 12 given permission and another two deferred.

Earlier this year the Local Government Association (LGA) called on the government to give councils powers to force academies to expand.

Councils have a legal duty to ensure all children have access to a school place, but academies act as their own admissions authorities.

The LGA said giving councils the power to force academies to take on extra pupils would allow them to reduce pressure on places.

Schools Week revealed last year that some academies had reduced their intake – despite a places shortage in their area.

Rivers Academy, in Hounslow, decreased its planned admission number from 215 to 180, despite the area being in the top five most squeezed for places.

The most recent board decisions show just one academy reduced its intake. Minutes show that Jubilee school, in Kent was allowed to downsize after the board discussed its finances and performance. The document did not reveal the size of the reduction.

It was reported earlier this year that schools in Kent had taken in an extra 2,000 pupils in just five months last year to ease the pressure on places.

The East of England and North East London headteacher board deferred an application from the Appleton School, in Essex, to increase its pupil numbers.

Essex County Council is one of the local authorities that has received the most government cash in recent years to build new school places.

How academies would expand their age ranges was not listed in all the minutes from the eight regional headteacher boards, but those that did reveal specifics showed that a handful were expanding nursery provision.

It follows the government's announcement that from September next year free childcare would be expanded to 30 hours a week.

Sam Gyimah, the childcare minister, has previously said that school-led nurseries were "at the heart of government plans".

Previous analysis of the board minutes by *Schools Week*, published last week, found nearly a quarter of all requests to convert schools to become academies were deferred, but none was declined.

More than a quarter of all applications to become academy sponsors were either deferred or rejected over the same period.

Alternative provision academy to offer IB

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

A new post-16 academy will become the first alternative provision (AP) school in the country to offer the International Baccalaureate (IB).

The headteacher at TBAP academy, in Fulham, west London, said the "much broader" programme than traditional A-levels would give students who had experienced "disparity" at key stage 4 a "clearer path" to university.

The IB is made up of six subject groups – language and literature, language acquisition, individuals and societies, sciences, mathematics, and the arts – plus the diploma core, which includes theory of knowledge, creativity, activity, service, and an extended essay.

Pupils who attend AP schools are usually unable to attend mainstream schools for a variety of reasons, such as exclusion, behaviour issues, illness, school refusal or pregnancy.

The IB is open to any student aged 16 to 19, but is most often taken by pupils at independent and grammar schools.

However, Gemma Dixon, the headteacher of the new academy, told *Schools Week* the

curriculum would give AP students "more time to discover their academic sense and passions."

"At the moment there is huge disparity between kids who spend time in AP at key stage 4 and kids in mainstream education who are ten-fold more likely to go on to university."

"We want to get young people, who are certainly able enough to go on to higher education, into university but for whatever reason it is not quite happening for them."

Students who take the IB are expected to take on a "slightly higher" workload than A-levels, according to Dixon, but she said it would benefit AP students who have "missed out on vital knowledge" at key stage 4.

"It allows students to catch up and fill in those sorts of gaps they've missed as a result of whatever difficulties they have encountered in earlier education."

"It is also a really value-added curriculum in terms of the additional work that goes alongside it – the theory of knowledge is very



Gemma Dixon

structured and a good way of looking at critical thinking. The extended essay really sets young people up to doing all those skills needed for higher education."

Peter Fidczuk, UK development and recognition manager at the IB, agreed that the diploma's "broad programme" would help AP pupils into university.

"It is a bigger qualification than A-levels but it is the same sort of element in the timetable compared with GCSEs."

He said the students would gain cognitive skills they "might not typically get" from a three A-level programme.

"It develops students to be enquirers and gives them the ability to write extensively, read information from a variety of sources and then simplify it."

The school is due to open in September.



Peter Fidczuk

Tuition fee rise 'will affect poorest pupils'

Plans in the higher education white paper to allow universities to increase tuition fees will affect the "poorest" pupils, says Sir Peter Lampl, head of the Sutton Trust.

As part of its plans to improve teaching in universities, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills wants to link tuition fees with each institution's performance, writes *Sophie Scott*.

Those rated highly for teaching quality could raise the £9,000 annual tuition fees in line with inflation.

The ratings are expected to be based on published information about the amount of time students spend in classes and lectures, the jobs graduates take, and average earnings.

But Lampl says this could have an impact on disadvantaged school pupils who may not be able to afford to attend the top-performing universities.

He said tuition fees were too high already and pointed to his charity's research that suggested students in England faced the highest level of debt in the English-speaking world.

He said it was "seriously concerning" that the government planned to "allow universities to increase their fees even more."

"With the abolition of maintenance grants the poorest students now face even higher debts, which impacts on their ability to go to graduate schools, to afford a mortgage, the timing of having children and other major life decisions."

Gordon Marsden, the shadow minister for higher education and skills, said that younger people have already fared "much worse"



Gordon Marsden: "another potential hurdle"

since the abolition of maintenance grants to support living costs.

The plan to raise fees were another "potential hurdle" for would-be students and would limit accessibility to higher education for young people from "non-traditional backgrounds".

Sorana Vieru, vice-president higher education at the National Union of Students, said: "Students will understandably be outraged at any suggestion universities could be allowed to put fees up even higher to improve teaching quality. It was only four years ago tuition fees were trebled and students now face debts up to £53,000 when they graduate."

She said students and the sector had been "very clear" the teaching excellence framework (TEF) should not be linked to rise

in fees and urged the government to "reflect" on the "muddled proposal".

Other plans in the white paper, which was released this week, include new universities and the publication of detailed information about the ethnic, gender and socio-economic background of students and how they progress.

Jo Johnson, the science minister, said: "Our universities are engines of economic growth and social mobility, but if we are to remain competitive and ensure that a high-quality education remains open to all, we cannot stand still."

"Making it easier for high-quality challenger institutions to start offering their own degrees will help drive up teaching quality, boost the economy and extend aspiration and life chances for students from all backgrounds."

NEWS

Creating a 'technical academy' is not streaming

SOPHIE SCOTT

@SOPHIE_SCOTT

Investigates

An all-through trust that will give pupils a "choice" between two schools offering a different "type of teaching" once they reach year 9 has denied that it is streaming pupils.

In September next year, the Bury St Edmunds all-through trust will open a free school that it is calling a "technical academy". It will take in at least 110 14-year-olds and offer them a "different pathway" through school.

A May 12 letter to parents said they would be given "guidance" as to whether their child should progress into the new technical academy or an existing mainstream upper school once they reached the end of the trust's middle school at year 8.

The trust currently educates children from age 4 to 18 through two primary schools, three middle schools and one upper school.

Vicky Neale, lead headteacher of the trust's academies, said all pupils at the new technical academy would sit the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and "categorically refutes" that the plan was tantamount to streaming.

There have been fears that trusts could use a loophole in the schools admissions code to effectively create grammar streams by channelling brighter pupils into an academic route and less-able pupils into schools that operate as technical institutions.

Neale said: "I just hate this whole idea about streaming, because nothing could be further from the truth. It's exactly what holds



this country back . . . the children in both places will follow the EBacc, it's just simply about a different way of learning."

She said the technical academy would work with businesses, such as Marshalls, UK Power Networks and local companies, to deliver the curriculum.

Pupils could also re-assess at the end of year 9 and after their GCSEs which school they wanted to attend and could switch at each point.

"It's one school and you choose pathways through that school . . . your journey from [year] 9 to 13 will be guided towards a choice . . . If you look at the white paper it talks exactly about that, there is a need for some sort of different provision but within a trust with successful schools. And that's exactly what we are."

In the past, Sir Michael Wilshaw, Ofsted chief inspector, has spoken of his support for allowing pupils to switch schools at 14, depending on their aptitude for academic or vocational study.

Kevin Courtney (pictured), deputy general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said it was "worrying" if pupils could be moved to different schools.

"We have always said we support high-quality, rigorous vocational qualifications alongside academic qualifications. But they should be happening in the same school so it is absolutely clear they have equal status, with children mixing and matching vocational and academic.

"I find it worrying that they are setting up another school. It also could affect league tables, if some pupils are moved to a separate school. It should be one comprehensive school."

The trust has also been given pre-approval from the Department for Education (DfE) to open another middle school.

Officials at Suffolk local authority have warned this could undo years of work moving away from a middle-school system, and towards a primary-secondary system to harmonise with most other parts of the country.

Bury St Edmunds is the last town in Suffolk to make the transition. The county council said it was now considering legal action against the government's decision.

Gordon Jones, cabinet member for children's services, education and skills, said he was "surprised" by the decision to allow new middle schools and "concerned" about its impact on the town's other schools.

Headteachers from primary and upper schools have also today written to Nicky Morgan, the education secretary, expressing their concern about her department's decision.

But Neale said the trust had been given approval to provide all-through provision in 2011, from the council.

IN brief

OCR WITHDRAWS NEW EXAMS

Exam boards have reaffirmed their commitment to delivering reformed GCSEs and A-levels yet to be approved by Ofqual, after OCR announced it will not run proposed qualifications in French, German and Spanish.

In a statement sent to *Schools Week*, the exam board said there was "too much work to be done" to achieve accreditation by the exams regulator in time for September.

Specifications in another six qualifications are also yet to be signed off.

But exam boards behind those subjects told *Schools Week* they are committed to delivering the new qualifications.

Ofqual said it was up to each exam board to make decisions on what they submitted for accreditation and that it was up to them to choose to withdraw.

NEW DIRECTOR FOR OFQUAL

Julie Swan is Ofqual's new executive director for general qualifications.

She takes the position permanently after working as acting executive director when her predecessor, Ian Stockford, left the exams regulator to join AQA in December.

Swan has worked for Ofqual for seven years and said she appreciated there were significant challenges ahead" as the organisation continued with reform of GCSEs and A-levels.

Swan is the second high-profile appointment at Ofqual this year after Sally Collier was chosen as chief regulator in March following the departure of Glenys Stacey.

Collier, a former civil servant, admitted in a parliamentary committee that she would need several months before she was up to speed with the changes.

Fashion moves up to a new level

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

An exam board has unveiled plans for a new A-level in fashion in the face of the government's push towards "rigorous" qualifications.

In 2014, Ofqual, the exams watchdog, said "soft" GCSEs and A-levels such as applied art and design would be scrapped, while others, including media studies, would be dramatically toughened.

Last year, Nicky Morgan, the education secretary, announced new content for "more rigorous and demanding" arts GCSEs and A-levels in a bid to "raise the quality of arts education".

However Ben Galvin, AQA qualifications developer, said he was "confident" its new A-level in fashion would meet the government's demands for rigour as it had "more explicit" links to maths and science.

"There has been more of a drive from the government at GCSE to make them more rigorous rather than at A-level.

"But what has happened specifically in this subject area is the introduction of the link to maths and science, which we have applied to the wider fashion and textiles/design and technology subject content."

He said students would learn equations

to calculate material required for a design, which is "a thing that you would expect fashion designers to be doing in the real world".

The new A-level replaces AQA's long-standing design and technology textiles course, which is currently part of the product design A-level.

But it could run into trouble as the government continues to struggle with a serious shortage of design and technology teachers.

So far this year, none of the teacher training routes for the subject has recruited more than 50 per cent of their targets.

And only 526 people started training as design and technology teachers last September – less than half the government's target of 1,279 trainees.

But Galvin said the teacher shortage in design and technology was not something AQA had "necessarily anticipated" as a problem for the A-level in fashion.

"The teacher shortage goes across subjects but it is not something that has played a part in the development of this particular specification.

"We are confident that it won't be a problem for us."

Content for the A-level includes reviewing the work of designers such as Chanel, Dior,



and Vivienne Westwood.

An AQA spokesperson also said it would cover the "major historical design styles and movements" as well as socio-economic influences on fashion such as the role of women in society and the Second World War.

Richard Green, chief executive of the design and technology association, said all new design and technology A-levels will be "more challenging, more rigorous and more productive" because of the increased maths and science content.

He added that the creative industries, including fashion, is one of the major growth sectors of the UK economy and "therefore encouraging students to pursue careers in this area is positive".

Green also said that the A-level in fashion is "far from being what might be perceived as a 'soft' subject.

The plans for the new A-level, which will be available to teach from September 2017, are being submitted to Ofqual for accreditation.

Galvin said he was "confident" that it is a "high-quality" qualification which will meet students' and teachers' needs while satisfying Ofqual's requirements.

He added: "We will of course seek to get accreditation as quickly as possible, and look forward to working with Ofqual to achieve this."

An Ofqual spokesperson said the watchdog will "consider the specification once it has been submitted to us".

NEWS

Government vows to change law on term-time holidays

CATH MURRAY

@CATHMURRAY_NEWS

The government has clashed with local councils over term-time holidays after a high court ruling supported a father who took his six-year-old to Disney World, causing her to miss seven days of school.

The court ruled last Friday that Jon Platt, a businessman on the Isle of Wight, did not have to pay the £120 fine issued by his local council, since his daughter was found to be a "regular" school attender with a 92 per cent attendance record, despite time off for the holiday.

The government responded that it was committed to reducing school absence and would now "look to change the law", but the Local Government Association – an organisation that speaks on behalf of the councils that must issue absence fines – called for more flexibility and understanding of families' need to spend "positive" time together.

Schools Week has previously reported that school leaders operate in a grey area when deciding what constitutes an unauthorised absence, including during the recent SATs protests.

Government guidance states that parents should "not normally take pupils on holiday during term", while the 1996 Education Act says parents have a requirement to ensure children attend school "regularly" – although no definition of "regular" is given.

Daniel Jackson, of law firm Slater and Gordon, said clarification was needed on what constituted "regular" school attendance.

Isle of Wight council attempted to make the case that attendance over the time a child was on holiday during term time was not regular, but the court ruled that attendance across the entire year must be considered.

Lord Justice Lloyd Jones said: "I do not consider it is open to an authority to criminalise every unauthorised holiday by the simple device of alleging that there has been no regular attendance in a period limited to the absence on holiday."

The Department for Education (DfE) said it was "disappointed" with the judgment but confident its policy to reduce school absence was "clear and correct".

It reiterated the claim of a clear link between missed school and a pupil's chance of gaining good GCSEs, and their resultant "life chances".

A DfE spokesperson said it would now look to change the law and "strengthen" statutory guidance to schools and local authorities.

In the meantime, schools should continue to follow the same rules with no changes to previous policies on unauthorised absences.

But the LGA said "blanket bans" did not work and called for a "sensible solution" to make allowance for special family occasions or unconventional work schedules.

"It shouldn't be that a tragedy has to befall a family for a child to get leave during term-time. There are many more joyous and positive occasions in life when consideration should be given to granting leave requests."

University refused access to pupil data

SOPHIE SCOTT

@SOPH_E_SCOTT

A Russell group university has been blocked from accessing confidential pupil information from the government after it claimed it could no longer get accurate data from UCAS.

The University of Exeter said it needed information from the national pupil database (NPD) as part of its widening participation programme, but was refused access by the Department for Education.

The department said it took "the privacy and protection of children extremely seriously" and "accordingly there are strict criteria in place to determine access to extracts from the NPD".

Since 2012, the university has used UCAS data to identify schools and colleges ranked in the bottom 40 per cent for average score per A-level entry or the average UCAS tariff per student. It said those students did better at university than their "similarly qualified" peers from higher attaining schools.

However, the university said "a change in the data available from UCAS" meant it was not able to "accurately" assess these "aspirational schools" anymore.

It then applied to receive the NPD, a highly sensitive document that contains data that includes children's full names, address, date of birth, ethnicity, detailed



descriptions of any special educational needs, if they receive free school meals and academic progress.

The university wanted to use this information to "target" pupils.

The application raised concerns with data protection experts who said it would be "unfair" on young people to receive such marketing.

But UCAS said the data it provided on schools already allowed the targeting of such children and included "achieved qualifications... A-level grades and subjects, and summary measures of A-level and tariff points".

A spokesperson added: "Statistics on the background and characteristics of applicants can also be requested."

Tim Turner, a data protection expert, said without consent from pupils it would be "unfair" on the children to receive unsolicited information and for their details

to be used in such a way, "no matter how well-intentioned or beneficial they might think it is".

Jen Persson from DefendDigitalMe, a campaign group calling for more transparency with the NPD, said: "That any covert research or direct marketing involving children could be happening without parental knowledge is deeply unsettling and would be highly unethical."

It is not the first time that an organisation has attempted to use this information to market itself to young people.

Last year, *Schools Week* reported how the Ministry of Defence attempted to gain access to the database to "target its messaging" around careers in the military.

In a statement, Exeter said that to make sure disadvantaged pupils had "every opportunity" to progress to higher education it needed information about their achievement "to get a rounded picture of their potential."

"We wished to use the data to target students directly to promote opportunities at the University of Exeter.

"Recent changes to the technical specification of UCAS data supply mean we were no longer able to identify aspirational schools in the same way."

Instead the university said teachers at outreach schools would target pupils on its behalf.

Charity's failure to repay loan puts schools at risk

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Two schools have been put at "significant risk" of losing their shared building and playing fields after the charity that owns their land was put under investigation after missing loan repayments.

The Charity Commission launched an inquiry last week into the Wolverhampton-based Nanaksar Thath Isher Darbar (NTID) charity.

Commission officials said they had "serious concerns" over the trustees' financial oversight and conduct.

Part of those concerns relate to land in Hayes, north London, that the charity leases to two schools – the 1,400-pupil Guru Nanak Sikh academy and the Nanaksar free school.

The charity used the land as security for a mortgage to buy an adjacent plot for £1.4 million that was supposed to house the Nanaksar school.

However, the site is now a carpark after planning permission to build the free school was turned down by the local authority. The school operates on the same site as the academy.

But the Charity Commission has said that the land is at "significant risk" after the trustees defaulted on repayments. Officials will now investigate whether trustees are "discharging their duties to protect the charity's assets".

A spokesperson for the Guru Nanak Sikh

multi-academy trust, which runs both the schools, said it has been working with Department for Education (DfE) officials to ensure the concerns did not impact the schools.

"The academy wishes to reassure all its pupils, students and their parents that there will be no disruption to the education of the children whilst the inquiry into the charity is ongoing."

The land is leased to the academy trust under a 125-year peppercorn arrangement.

Jonathan Fewster, a partner at law firm Bircham Dyson Bell, said that a school's right to occupy a site should be unaffected if a new mortgage was agreed after the school had taken up residence, or the bank had consented to a lease before a mortgage was given the go-ahead.

That is believed to be the case in this situation, but a trust spokesperson did not respond when asked for clarification by *Schools Week*.

However, Fewster said this might not apply in some circumstances – including if there was a conflict of interests between the charity and the academy trust at the time the lease was entered into, which could allow a bank to set aside a transaction.

The charity was the original sponsor of the Guru Nanak Sikh Academy when it converted in 2010.

A government investigation into alleged financial misconduct at the trust, published in April 2014, found "a high degree of overlap" with charity trustees also members of the academy trust.



The investigation also found "inappropriate transactions" of more than £200,000 between the two organisations. Using the school land to secure another mortgage was also deemed "inappropriate".

Investigators said the trust had breached its funding agreement and a number of financial handbook rules. *Schools Week* asked the Department for Education for clarification about what would happen to the school if the lender was able to take control of the land, but did not respond.

The academy trust said it had since overhauled its governance team and was now "completely separate" to NTID.

A spokesperson for the charity said trustees recognised there were historic weaknesses in their governance and had strengthened processes.

A DfE spokesperson said it welcomed the inquiry and was working closely to safeguard the long-term future of the trust.

NEWS

Careers guidance: how does your school measure up?

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Eight "benchmarks" for careers advice will form part of new statutory guidance for schools, but the academic behind them has warned that they should never be used as an accountability measure.

Schools were given statutory responsibility for careers advice in 2014, but while Ofsted inspectors currently look for evidence that all post-16 routes are being promoted in schools – including vocational courses – the strength and quality of the guidance is not measured.

The government has confirmed that although it will update its statutory guidance to include the benchmarks outlined in the Gatsby Foundation's 2014 good careers guidance report, it has "no plans" to make them a compulsory target for schools, after report author John Holman and school leaders expressed concerns about their use.

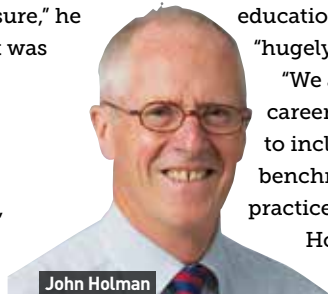
A new tool, supported by the Careers and Enterprise Company and unveiled this month by Holman, an academic at the University of York, will enable schools to rate their progress against the benchmarks and compare themselves with others.

Holman told *Schools Week* he had made it clear to the government he did not want the benchmarks to be used externally.

He was "very pleased" that the government had been supportive of the benchmarks and "encouraged" that Ofsted inspectors seemed to be asking "the right questions", but stressed that the eight benchmarks are simply a "useful" tool for schools to use internally.

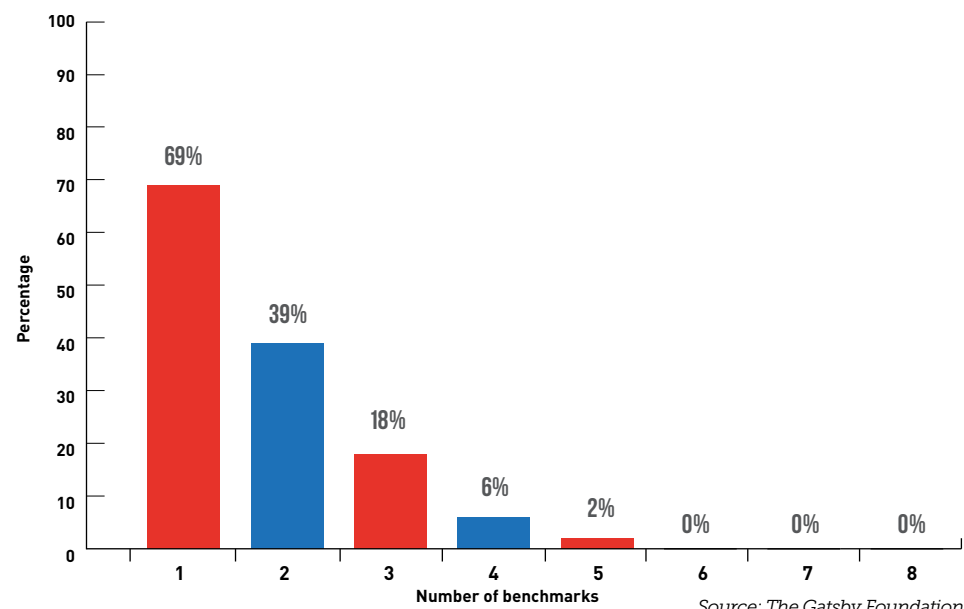
"I have been quite explicit that we do not see it as an accountability measure," he said. "I would be concerned if it was used like that."

The benchmarks include the stability of school careers programmes, access to career and labour market information, and exposure to employers, workplaces and further



John Holman

HOW MANY BENCHMARKS DID MOST SCHOOLS MEET?



Source: The Gatsby Foundation

education.

They also test how well schools address the needs of every pupil and link the curriculum to careers.

Malcolm Trobe, the acting general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the benchmarks were a "useful tool" but he would have "significant concerns" if the scores became part of a regulatory requirement.

"I can understand why school leaders have these concerns," he said, adding that the government had a tendency to opt for a prescriptive approach, therefore creating a "box-ticking culture" in schools.

A Department for Education spokesperson said the government was aware that careers education in schools or colleges varied "hugely".

"We are revising our statutory careers guidance for schools to include the eight Gatsby benchmarks, which reflect best practice."

Holman, a well-known chemist who has become a prominent

expert on careers education in recent years, said schools had demonstrated an appetite for an online tool after he released a report for Gatsby in which the benchmarks were first outlined.

At the time of the report's release, 361 schools were asked to rate their own performance against the benchmarks. None felt they met even six of the benchmarks; just 2 per cent said they met five.

Six per cent met four of the benchmarks, 18 per cent met three, 39 per cent two and 69 per cent, just one.

Since then, the new Careers and Enterprise Company has received almost £70 million to pay for mentoring and other schemes that link schools with businesses.

The pilot of the online tool is due to begin this term ahead of a nationwide roll-out in September.

The 8 benchmarks of careers education

- Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by pupils, parents, teachers, governors and employers. valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes.
- Learning from career and labour market information Every pupil, and their parents, should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information. Experiences of workplaces Every pupil should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.
- Addressing the needs of each pupil Pupils have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each pupil. A school's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout. Encounters with further and higher education All pupils should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
- Linking curriculum learning to careers All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths. Personal guidance Every pupil should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all pupils but should be timed to meet their individual needs.
- Encounters with employers and employees Every pupil should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are

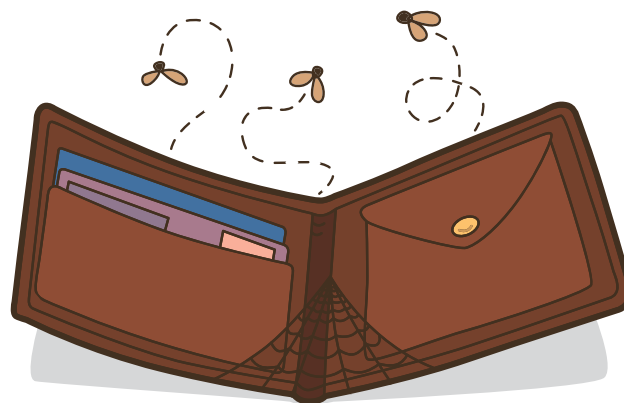
Financial warning for second UTC

Buckinghamshire's university technical college has become the second of the institutions to be warned recently about its finances after it experienced cashflow problems and accrued a "significant deficit", writes Freddie Whittaker.

The financial notice to improve issued to the 14 to 19 college comes about a week after Daventry UTC was warned over similar problems, and as Central Bedfordshire UTC and UTC Lancashire prepare to close their doors this summer following recruitment problems.

In a letter sent on May 5 to Tony Withell, Buckinghamshire's principal, Sue Baldwin, the Education Funding Agency (EFA) director for academies and maintained schools, raised concerns about the "apparent loss of financial control, the failure of the trust to balance its budget" and the circumstances in which it requested an advance for 2016-17 from the agency.

But Withell told *Schools Week*: "Good financial management at Buckinghamshire UTC is a priority and we are in discussions with the EFA about this matter."



"We have ambitious targets for recruitment for the autumn; in the meantime, we continue to deliver a high-quality technical education pathway for our students, equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to go on to higher education, training or employment."

Figures obtained through freedom of information (FOI) requests made earlier this year show that Buckinghamshire UTC has been running at just 21.7 per cent capacity this academic year.

One hundred and thirty students enrolled in 2015-16, down from 150 in 2014-15 – despite a capacity of 600.

Five colleges with the lowest numbers of learners relative to overall capacity, as shown by FOI figures for UTCs that opened between 2010 and 2013, have all either announced they are to close or are in financial difficulties.

Daventry UTC had 151 out of a possible 600 learners at the time of the disclosure, while UTC Lancashire had 113 out of a possible 800 learners.

A lack of sufficient pupil numbers was also a factor in the closure of both Hackney UTC and Black Country UTC last August. The government has called for the colleges to operate as part of multi-academy trusts in future to improve their viability.

NEWS

IN brief

MONEY WOES IN TWO ACADEMIES

Two academies in Leicestershire are the latest to be warned about money problems after government officials identified weaknesses in their financial positions.

Robert Smyth academy in Market Harborough, and the Hinckley academy and John Cleveland sixth-form centre, have both been issued with financial notices to improve.

At Robert Smyth, a failure to balance the school's budget led to interventions by the Education Funding Agency last December, but despite "cooperation and extensive discussions" between the school's sponsor and officials, the agency remains concerned about the trust's financial management.

Hinckley also failed to balance its budget, and did not submit its accounts by the December 31 deadline. The agency said a recovery plan submitted by the trust demonstrated a "weak long-term financial position requiring further advances over and above those already granted".

Both organisations will now have some spending powers suspended and must demonstrate improvements in their financial position or risk termination of the funding agreements that allow them to operate the schools.

ILLEGAL SCHOOLS 'PUT CHILDREN AT RISK'

Weaknesses in current home-schooling rules are being exploited by illegal schools, which may be putting children at "significant risk of harm and indoctrination", Sir Michael Wilshaw has said.

A taskforce set up by Ofsted with resources from the Department for Education (DfE) has already issued warning notices to suspected illegal schools across England. More than 100 have been identified.

In a letter sent to the government this week, Wilshaw said he believed the problem was more widespread and affecting more children than previously thought.

Last December, a BBC investigation revealed that almost 37,000 children were recorded as home-educated in England, some 10,000 more than six years earlier.

A government consultation on inspection powers for out-of-school education closed in January, with a response from the DfE on how it intends to proceed expected in the coming months. It is believed it will seek new legal powers to tackle the problems.

IPPR REPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH

Ofsted should inspect mental health provision in schools more often, says a report published by IPPR, the left-leaning policy think tank.

The organisation called for £500 million to be earmarked in NHS budgets for school mental health provision.

It identifies four barriers to service improvements, including a lack of funding and poor school counselling services.

Secondary schools should receive one day per week of on-site mental health support from NHS specialists, the report says, rising to two days a week by 2022-23. The government has said they agree in principle.

However, IPPR identifies cuts to mental health services as a problem, saying the value of the "early intervention" allocation to local authorities fell from £3.2 billion per year in 2010-11 to £1.4 billion in 2015-16.

Existing trusts to pick up £300m of conversion fund

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Investigates

Half of the £600 million earmarked to support the conversion of schools into academies will be handed to existing multi-academy trusts.

The Department for Education has finally released the breakdown of the funding to convert all schools by "building capacity" in the system. However, it has confirmed that just £300 million will be handed to schools and sponsors turning around failing establishments.

In a written answer to a question from Lord Hunt, a Labour peer, academies minister Lord Nash said the £600 million allocated through last autumn's spending review and this year's budget would be split down the middle, with £300 million to be spent on helping "strong and effective" trusts to "grow and improve".

The government, which previously said the amount available would be "more than £500 million" and had not set out its plans to distribute the cash, now faces questions over the decision.

Lucy Powell, the shadow education secretary, told *Schools Week* there was "no transparency or accountability" over the decision on how the money would be distributed: "The opaque nature of

funds distributed by regional schools commissioners to these chains will raise eyebrows."

Although a plan to force all schools in England to become academies by 2022 has been abandoned, ministers have said they remain committed to the idea of a fully academised system and that it is expected the conversion fund will be spent as planned.

Under a compromise deal announced earlier this month, the government will now focus on converting all schools in areas where the local council is found to be either "underperforming" or "financially unviable", although the metrics by which they will be judged are yet to be revealed.

Russell Hobby, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, has questioned the decision to allocate such a large chunk of the money to existing trusts.

"This is a large sum to be spent, in part, on forcing already good and outstanding schools to do something they don't want or need to do," he said.

"The funds could be better targeted to build capacity where it is needed."

Under its new proposals, the government will look to existing trusts to pick up a lot of the schools that are forced to convert. But this is not without its pitfalls, as several

of the more prominent chains have run into financial difficulties amid fears that they grew too quickly.

While the government has told trusts such as E-ACT and the Academies Enterprise Trust that they cannot take on any more schools for the time being, others, including Reach2 and Plymouth CAST, would have difficulty demonstrating improvement because so few of their existing schools have been inspected since conversion.

Janet Downs, a campaigner with the Local Schools Network, has also questioned whether £300 million would be enough.

"I calculated that converting all remaining schools into academies would cost nearly £500 million in legal fees alone; £300 million would be £200 million short. Would the shortfall be filled by nibbling at the education budget?"

A government spokesperson said ministers had "always been clear" that they had "more than £500 million available in this parliament".

"This funding comes on top of the government's protection to the core schools budget which will be more than £40 billion next year, including the pupil premium – funding worth £2.5 billion a year targeted at the most disadvantaged pupils."



What a difference a percentage point makes

The number of primary schools deemed as "failing" by falling below government floor standards is likely to be higher than first thought after Nicky Morgan mixed up statistics in a key speech, writes Freddie Whittaker.

Last month headteachers welcomed the education secretary's announcement that only an extra 1 per cent of primaries would fall below the new standard compared with last year.

But the government has confirmed the rise is capped at 1 percentage point, rather than 1 per cent as announced by Morgan, and means that the number of failing primaries could rise by more than 160.

The Royal Statistical Society told *Schools Week* the blunder showed the need for MPs to be statistically literate, and confirmed Morgan had not attended either of two training sessions offered to politicians.

Hetan Shah, the society's executive director, said: "The society has run training for MPs in basic statistics and we would be happy to put something on for the Department for Education if they wanted it."

In response to concerns about harder tests and their impact on schools, the education secretary told the National Association of Head Teachers' annual conference in Birmingham that the number allowed to fail would be capped at "no more than 1 per cent more...than last year".



Nicky Morgan: mixed up statistics

In 2015, 676 schools, about 4 per cent of England's 16,766 primaries, fell below the standard. Based on these figures, a 1 per cent cap would have meant no more than seven more schools failing this year.

But a cap of 1 percentage point means up to 843 schools could fall below the standard, an increase of 160 more.

The government confirmed the cap was based on a percentage point increase, but declined to explain why both the final draft and delivered versions of Morgan's speech referred to 1 per cent rather than 1 percentage point.

Rachel Collander-Brown, who teaches maths to 11 to 18-year-olds at Southfields academy in south London, said she would expect her pupils to grasp the difference between per cent and percentage point by the time they were in year 7.

She added that government staff releasing figures should "know the difference and to write about it properly, not in a way that's easier to understand if that way of writing it is actually wrong".

Collander-Brown said she often taught the difference to pupils analysing statistics in newspaper articles, using employment rates and tax as examples.

"If unemployment was at 5 per cent and went up to 6 per cent, you could say it had risen by 20 per cent or by 1 percentage point, but to say it had gone up 1 per cent would be wrong.

"Also if tax has gone from 10 to 12 per cent, it would be wrong to say it had risen by 2 per cent."

Russell Hobby, the general secretary of the headteachers' association, said his union had "always assumed the worst case interpretation of the announcement in the first place", adding that it was "important to put a limit on the number of schools that could fall below the floor".

"It is also important to see this as a cap, not a target.

"However, increasingly we believe that it would be inappropriate to use assessment data for floor standards at all this year. The uncertainty around assessment is too great for it to be used for high stakes accountability," he said.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "While we are raising standards, the secretary of state has reassured schools that the proportion falling below the floor will not rise by more than 1 percentage point this year."



Hetan Shah



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I think I just saw a drunken looking rat run for cover...

EDITOR'S COMMENT

@miss_mcinemey | laura.mcinemey@schoolsweek.co.uk

THE TRUTH IS, PUPILS DO NOT GET SHAFTED BY EXAMS

What do drunk rats, teenage boys and an independent drugs company have in common? Despite sounding like key components from a song in the 1980s they are actually items mentioned in AQA's biology GCSE paper taken earlier this week.

Echoing youngsters across generations who walked out of exams and asked "what the heck was all that about", the year 11s on this one did likewise – only this time they had smartphones, and Facebook.

A pupil called Jack from East Yorkshire reportedly said he didn't "have a clue" what the questions had to do with biology and he rang the exam board to complain. "It's stuff that we've never been taught, and that's not the teachers' fault, it's the exam board's fault, because they didn't tell the teachers to teach us it."

This trend for pupils to panic about exams post haste and in online forums, as well as calling exam boards to demand action against difficulty, has gathered pace of late and it's a problem. First, it means young people are spending more time ruminating over answers already missed than they are revising for the next day's exams.

I was disturbed to see the founder of online forum Student Room say that after the AQA biology exam a record number of young people took to its pages to

discuss the incident. Sharing worries is fine, but there were several exams spread over the next days. Why weren't they revising instead of hissing over things that can't be changed?

Second, while most young people sit exams at the same time, there are some cases where time conflicts mean pupils sit tests the next day. Although kept in a controlled environment overnight, this hasn't usually required an entire media blackout – including radio and tv – but in a world where exam questions beget media hysteria, the likelihood is that questions may eke out.

Last year's "Hannah's sweets" incident seems to have been the watershed moment for such behaviour. In a maths GCSE paper set by exam board Pearson, pupils were asked the following:

There are n sweets in a bag. Six of the sweets are orange. The rest of the sweets are yellow.

Hannah takes a random sweet from the bag. She eats the sweet.

Hannah then takes at random another sweet from the bag. She eats the sweet.

The probability that Hannah eats two orange sweets is $1/3$.

Show that $n^2 - n - 90 = 0$.

That last line seems to come from nowhere. One minute we're imagining the joy of Hannah eating a jellied fried egg and a bon-bon, the next she's being

whacked with an alien-looking equation. Indeed, it reminds me of the time I told a pupil she must remove her feet from a chair only to have her reply that I was ugly. Our two sentences were both plausible: but it didn't mean one followed from the other.

Online hell broke loose after the sweets incident, with people ringing Pearson to complain and pupils ranting on social media. The national media ran comments, and news articles, and radio shows hosted phone-ins. Everyone feeling the stress of exams got cathartic release and the world moved on.

Or did it? The AQA biology exam is the first of this year's GCSE furores, but it won't be the only paper with a difficult question and, eventually, at least one exam will have an error in it – at which point I half expect the internet to melt along with the unfortunate exam body's phone lines.

Critics will point to these exam issues as proof our testing systems have "gone mad". Exam boards are sloppy, the government is reforming qualifications too

quickly, it's unfair that pupils have to sit tests. Those will be the arguments.

Actually, what hard questions show is that the paper is challenging the full ability range, while errors show that humans were involved in the process and none of us is perfect.

Such sympathy is fine for you, people will say, but what about the pupils who get shafted by bad examinations?

Thing is: pupils don't get shafted by the exams. If a question is so hard no one can answer it, or an error makes a question impossible, then grade boundaries will be moved to account for that.

Really the only damaging consequence of a cacophony over difficult exams is the stress it puts on pupils who are already worrying as they eat their breakfast, and now face amplified concerns in forums and social media.

It is fun for adults to try, and fail, to answer questions about Hannah's sweets or the blood alcohol level of rats. For 16-year-olds these things affect their futures. We need to treat the questions with gravitas, while also reminding pupils that looking forward, rather than moaning about the past, is the best way for them to achieve.



READERS' REPLY



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Financial tipping point will force councils to academise

Victoria Jaquiss, Leeds

Jonathan Simons, quoted in your piece, previously wrote in The Telegraph: "It would be irresponsible for government to simply allow the risk that an unsustainable rump of schools, that would widen attainment gaps, emerges, as opposed to intervening early and proactively building capacity to support all schools."

Well, Jonathan, the government was happy to allow the little academy rumps to set themselves up anywhere where unscrupulous business people, parading as educationists, could panic a set of governors into jumping before pushed. Irresponsible is one word. Clueless, greedy and corrupt are three more that spring to mind. Methinks Nicky's tipping point is close at hand.

Janet Downs, Lincolnshire

Three-quarters of schools are still not academies. They are mostly primary schools, although nearly a third of secondaries still haven't converted. Primary schools are mostly not large enough to become standalone academies. This means they would have to join multi-academy trusts and lose their individual legal identity. They also risk losing autonomy because the amount of freedom allowed to individual academies is in the gift of academy trustees.

Local authorities should bear this in mind if they consider asking the government to convert all the area's schools. The freedom their schools already enjoy is not in their gift to give away.

Less of a u-turn and more of a z-turn

Alistair Thomas, Worcestershire

The government is using school improvement as a weapon and hiding behind a "school-led" system to centralise everything.

The self-improving school system seems to suggest that Clusters (MATs, umbrella trusts, etc) can manage improvement themselves with outstanding schools helping struggling ones, the MAT distributing the money fairly, etc. If this model was workable, you wouldn't need to turn schools into businesses; the whole lot would run on love and community spirit (an extension of the classroom if you will). Either the academy system is

hopelessly naive or it is a cynical attempt to get yet more for nothing from teachers.

Education improvement should be highly valued. It should be one vehicle for outstanding organisations and outstanding teachers to earn the outstanding remuneration they deserve. In theory, as struggling schools are improved, the need dries up, but the skill is the same required to grow new teachers and the intellectual property involved is potentially a national asset to export outstanding teaching to the rest of the world. A business approach has a very long way to go before it need worry about making itself redundant.

Forced academisation looms for coasting councils

Christia Malone, address supplied

This is all part of the privatisation plan for schools. The government are at pains to explain how they are taking schools from bureaucrats and giving them to the profession – complete nonsense of course. Watch as over the next ten years the experiment fails and the government will claim they need to call in the private sector to sort out the mess.

Children can then be educated in Capita, Serco schools.

Kevin Quigley, Shrewsbury

In many respects academising secondary schools is straightforward. But what of all the good and outstanding primary schools in these areas? Primary school academisation stalled for very good reasons, and the data simply does not support the notion that it raises standards in the sector. This academise, don't academise, but stay with your good local authority, is causing havoc in governing bodies the length and breadth of the country. Not only will there be an exodus of headteachers, but mass resignations from governing bodies at the very time when schools need experienced people who ask the important question: why?

REPLY OF THE WEEK
RECEIVES A SCHOOLS
WEEK MUG!



Be functional, not faddish, and keep it simple

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Sarah Thurlby, address supplied

I agree with Craig Smailes (May 13) that school buildings need to be functional, flexible and adaptable. They also need to be safe, able to be used by the community and designed to encourage easy supervision and good behaviour.

Many teachers would disagree about centrally controlled systems, preferring to be able to adjust heating, lighting and ventilation themselves depending on the weather and the activity going on in their class.

Controls need to be simple. Too much glass can be a problem for heat gain – this has been seen with many of the Building Schools for the Future projects where additional mechanical cooling has had to be retrofitted.

I would say that most heads would prefer to have choice over how the building is maintained, most find the constraints and costs of PFI unwelcome and would prefer to employ their own facilities management (FM) services rather than being tied in to long running contracts for all hard and soft FM services.

Modular construction can indeed save time on site and sometimes money – but not always as it can depend on whether standard designs can be used and whether there are abnormal or planning constraints that push the construction costs up. Sometimes traditional build is a better solution.

There is a lot to be said for simple design – many of the recent fads are already past their sell-by dates. For example, a lot of new schools were designed with teaching spaces with no walls and doors.

Walk round those same schools a year or so later and you will find builders installing walls because teaching was impossible without the ability to manage noise and distraction.

Smailes's final point is the crux of the matter though – having spaces that enrich learning (let's forget exam results and focus on what education is really about: preparing young people for adulthood, not just work!). He makes no mention of the importance of outside space and I would contend that's equally important, although sadly compromised by the drive to put schools on to all manner of unsuitable sites.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

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THE INTERVIEW

JON YATES

LAURA MCINERNEY

@MISS_MCINERNEY

Jon Yates, strategy director at The Challenge

Jon Yates is slender, ginger and no longer in a meeting that he should be in. He is on the phone being harassed by me – and it's all the Queen's fault.

Amid weeks of chat about academy conversions, almost no one noticed that new laws were being planned (and announced in Wednesday's Queen's Speech) to force schools into promoting the National Citizen Service (NCS), a programme of experiences for 16 and 17-year-olds completed during school holidays.

Yates had noticed the plan, though, because he is strategy director at The Challenge, the organisation that delivers many of the service's places. He is also one of the people who came up with the basic idea.

Having left his meeting to give the lowdown on how it came about, and why it deserves such royal treatment, he starts to explain. Fast.

"The challenge was set up in 2009 by me and two other people. It was made up by three of us sat around a kitchen table.

"I should say that before that I had a career that makes no sense whatsoever. I came to London to become a stand-up comedian, which I failed drastically at. No one threw anything at me, but it was on the edge of possibility.

"So I stumbled into doing community work in Newham, and found myself in this incredibly mixed environment for the first time in my life. I grew up in Plymouth, and I have ginger hair. It is fair to say that where I grew up, ginger hair was the dominant ethnic minority. It's not the most diverse place.

"I then went to university in Oxford, which was its own bubble. And then suddenly I found myself in Newham as a community worker, and found myself in a complete mix of people – white working class, professionals, Muslims: first and second-generation, black Afro-Caribbean: first, second and third-generation.

"I was struck by how incredibly tolerant Newham was, remarkably so, but how often I spent my time in spaces with one of those groups rather than in spaces where there were all four groups, together.

"Then, I accidentally applied to McKinsey [the management consultants] having clicked the wrong button on a website. It wasn't what I intended to do," he laughs.

What did he intend to do? "I don't know! I had a panic. When you've planned to become a comedian in London it suggests that you're not the best planner. But I swear it never said McKinsey on the advert because I would have been too terrified to apply and assumed myself too incompetent for the whole thing. Generations and generations of my family are teachers and vicars, that's what we do."

To everyone's surprise, especially his own, he passed the interview and "got a big job advising companies and governments on things".

But his community spirit hadn't died. "I still had in my heart that I should try to save the world. So I went to work in international development, which ended with me finding myself in Nairobi around the time that there was a lot of violence because of a disputed election. What I realised, from the middle of it, was that the groups were being ramped up by mistruths and they didn't know each other well enough to know that these things weren't true.

"I was then struck by how horribly disconnected I was. McKinsey is very global, but you don't spend much time with people who aren't well educated, or who aren't in a

well-paid profession. And I realised I was moving from one little bubble to another: Portsmouth, Oxford, Newham. Marvellous places; but their own little bubbles. And then I saw a bubble go horribly wrong in Kenya. So when I came back to the UK I desperately wanted to do something entrepreneurial that would connect people together across these invisible dividing lines."

The Challenge was designed as a programme to attract people from all income and ethnic groups and get them to do physical activities, plus service elements.

This eventually became the model for the National Citizen Service, and it expanded from three people in a kitchen, to 700 staff.

He believes the programme works because it mixes people from such different backgrounds: "We presume that any time we bring together people there will be social awkwardness. The key is to get them doing stuff together. That's why in NCS we do abseiling, climbing, and canoeing. Not because we want brilliant canoeists, but because when you do things together people forget they are different."

He agrees that being singled out for promotion in schools

could annoy other charities also trying to work in them, but he encourages such groups to contact NCS, as it works with more than 2,000 other organisations and recommends local opportunities. Instead of everyone trying to knock on school doors, he believes NCS can be a conduit.

Each place on the programme costs about £1,500 but most of that is covered by the government – bar a £50 fee that comes from participants (and bursaries are available). David Cameron has also committed to funding a place for every 16 and 17-year-old who wants one. But if they do all take it up, the cost will be in the billions. Is it worth it?

Yates says the programme is regularly evaluated by independent firms and the reports are published on the website. He also notes the benefits of the programme on communication skills – something employers regularly say they want.

"We are also on track to become the most diverse country in the world in the next 30 years and our young people have to be ready to flourish in that world," he says.

With enthusiasm and arguments like that, it's no wonder the Queen is on his side.



“I wanted to connect people across invisible dividing lines”

NEWS REACTION



HELEN SADDLER

Executive director of inclusive classrooms,
senior policy officer, education and youth, Greater London Authority

Use TAs for what they do best

Durham switches to term-time contracts

Reported on schoolsweek.co.uk on May 17: Durham county council plans to end the contracts of 2,700 teaching assistants and offer them lower pay deals.

It is thought Durham wants the assistants to have term-time only deals – meaning staff could lose up to £400 a month.

Redundancies have similarly been mooted in some academy trusts, which say they are necessary to meet squeezed budgets.

Schools Week reported last year how a union campaign stopped South Tyneside council from switching support staff from 52-week to 39-week contracts, but it is believed the council now employs new staff on the term-time only deals.

It follows headteachers' claims that they face an erosion of up to £200,000 in their annual budgets after hikes in national insurance and pension contributions.

Over the past two years a series of reports have challenged the effectiveness of teaching assistants but a review of evidence by the Education Endowment Foundation concluded that if well-managed, they prompted positive outcomes.

Teaching maths and English might not be many teaching assistants' forte, but they have great potential influence on pupils' social inclusion, says Helen Saddler

When you hear "teaching assistant", what comes to mind? Jack of all trades, playtime supervisor, indispensable, poorly qualified, substitute teacher?

All of the above came out of my three-year PhD study into the role of teaching assistants (TAs) in primaries across the UK.

I heard many stories highlighting their positive impact but I also heard many tales of woe: from pay cuts to poor status.

There has been a recent surge in interest around the role of TAs, initially sparked by headline-grabbing reports that claimed they were having little or, in some cases, a negative impact on pupil attainment. How can this be when so many schools say that they are vital?

It was during my initial teacher training,

when faced with a class in which 26 children were identified as having special educational needs, that I first became aware of the value of TAs. Julie, the assistant in my class, had built strong relationships with many children – particularly those with the strongest difficulties. Crucially, she didn't

The lowest qualified staff often work with the highest need students

just understand the learning needs of those children; she understood their social needs too. I decided to explore this idea further and embarked on doctoral study.

The role of TAs to support children with social inclusion emerged strongly in my research. Their pastoral role often places them well to implement socially inclusive practices and support children to fully participate in school life.

We know that if a child is happy, has friends and feels included then his or her learning will improve – and the same is true in the reverse.

It is also widely acknowledged that the lowest trained, lowest paid and lowest qualified staff often work with the highest need students, and we expect them to take responsibility for the learning of those students. This isn't getting results and often causes real job satisfaction problems amongst TAs.

This is not to say that teaching assistants don't have skills – they often have very strong skills in supporting children to make friends, feel included in school life and participate in lessons.

So, if we know TAs are not always brilliant at teaching English and maths why don't we re-conceptualise their role to take account of their potential influence on pupils' social inclusion?

This could happen if TAs are well managed, something that isn't always easy as many schools have an ineffective and unsustainable approach to working with TAs.

We can't just pull TAs away from core subjects, nor should we, but we can integrate their skills with social inclusion into the support that they provide.

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OPINION



BRIAN LIGHTMAN

Education consultant

Let's try to avoid wasting everyone's time

The ECDL, as promoted by the schools network, the PiXL club, is a valuable qualification for many students, says Brian Lightman – one that should prompt Ofqual to think carefully before placing further constraints on awarding bodies

Ask any employer what they want from a qualification and they will tell you they want it to evidence the degree to which a candidate has demonstrated an understanding or mastery of the content of the specification. Understandably, they become frustrated when a prospective employee with a certified qualification is not able to do this.

Various factors can explain this, not least the fact that “mugging up” the content before an examination does not guarantee that this content will be remembered forever. We all forget things! It was ever thus.

More significantly, however, qualifications policy during the past five years has steadfastly moved away from a position where that aim will be fulfilled. Instead of assessment being at the heart of pedagogical practice, policymakers view it primarily as a means of holding schools to account. Where results are “capped” in the name of “rigour”, and where grade boundaries are largely a statistical construct, it is not possible to guarantee that a candidate who has mastered X will gain a grade Y.

A deep philosophical question underpins this: “should qualifications open doors inclusively to anyone who reaches a given standard or should they be gatekeepers to the preserve of an elite as the old O-levels and university matriculation once were?”

In a recent announcement, Ofqual instructed awarding bodies to revisit the time it takes to prepare students for a qualification. It would seem that the worthiness of some qualifications on the list approved by the Department for Education (DfE) and, in one case, an internationally recognised one, has been called into question.

The reason for this investigation has nothing to do with the knowledge or skills those achieving these qualifications might have demonstrated by passing the exam, but instead relates to the amount of direct teaching candidates have received in preparation for the test. This contradicts concerns the same regulator and others

have often expressed about “teaching to the test”, often referred to as “gaming”. There is a fine balance between good teaching and bending the rules or cheating. Yet it seems that emerging policy could be placing teaching to the test at the heart of curriculum planning.

There is a fine balance between good teaching and cheating

Most importantly, where does this leave the accreditation of prior learning, a widely accepted aspect of many respected qualifications? Does it, for example, mean that, when I learnt the violin as a child I would not have been allowed to take my grade exams unless I had had a set amount of teaching rather than taking the test when I was ready? Does it mean that I should have been required to attend a further course before taking the final diploma of the Institute of Linguists even though I had a degree in German and was able to gain that valuable professional qualification without doing so? Are we going to force anyone seeking a professional qualification or degree to jump over time-consuming hurdles when their CV plainly evidences that they do not need to be retaught some sections of the course? Wouldn't that be a cap on aspiration and a waste of valuable time that could be spent on learning something new?

One qualification under scrutiny is the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), a topic extensively reported in *Schools Week*. ECDL is an internationally recognised qualification that the government's national careers service strongly recommends. Indeed its website states: “if you have passed ECDL, employers know you have the skills to carry out the main tasks on a computer . . . and it looks great on your CV.” The same website continues: “If you're confident you already have the skills needed for the ECDL, you don't need to undertake any training. You can just sit the test at an approved centre.”

What could possibly be wrong with equipping young people who have no other formal qualifications evidencing these skills with such a valuable qualification that demonstrates competences they have developed throughout their schooling and that are needed in almost every job?



PAUL BARBER

Director of the Catholic Education Service

Calm down: the church isn't after a 'land grab'

The memorandum of understanding between the Catholic church and the government is little more than a written definition about their working relationship, says Paul Barber

Much has been written over the past month about the memoranda of understanding (MoU) between the Department for Education (DfE) and both the Church of England and the Catholic church. Many have sought to sensationalise them as a “church land grab” or as a u-turn in the government's academisation agenda.

The reality, however, is more mundane. Both documents essentially set out the working relationship with the Anglican and Catholic dioceses and the Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs). Moreover, most of our memorandum is about how dioceses and the RSCs communicate with each other, especially now power is moving away from local authorities, with whom dioceses have traditionally had strong working relationships.

Education is at the heart of the church's mission

The other criticism levelled by secularist campaigners is that this is yet another example of religious privilege, akin to bishops in the House of Lords. But this simplistic approach is misguided and demonstrates a limited understanding of the educational landscape in England.

Let's put religion aside for one moment and deal with the facts. The Catholic church runs more than 2,100 schools in England. It is the largest sole provider of secondary education and second largest provider of primary education (after the Church of England) in the country.

Any organisation with this number of schools and more than a century's worth of experience in providing education in England would expect some written understanding with the government about their working relationship, especially in the context of the move

towards academisation.

It also makes sense for an organisation that makes a substantial financial contribution to the state on the scale that we do, in terms of the use of its land and buildings, to have an understanding with the DfE as to what constitutes as a Catholic school.

But different organisations have been recently trying to use the MoU for their own political and campaigning purposes, either because of their objection to religious ethos schools, or their disagreement with the government's backing of academies.

To draw what is essentially a working guidelines document with the two largest providers of education into a political debate about academies in general is a little unfair on the church, its schools and on the government.

Be that as it may, the Catholic church's position on academies remains the same. It has more than 450 academies in England, that's around a fifth of our total provision. What's more, the church pioneered many of the academy models in use today, such as multi-academy trusts, executive headteachers and school partnerships.

It would be completely wrong, therefore, to suggest that the church is anti-academy. Seeing as we have led the way on so many aspects of the academies programme, why would we be against it?

It is fair to say that we have reservations about schools being compelled to become academies, believing that the decision should be made by both the school and the relevant local diocese. There are still important discussions that need to be had with the DfE, but the contents of our MoU is a welcome continuation in defining our working relationship.

Education and the procurement of knowledge are at the heart of the church's mission. The first schools in this country were Catholic and after the re-establishment of the Catholic bishops in 1850, the church's first priority was the education of the poor, building schools before churches.

We are rightly proud of this and we welcome the DfE's recognition of our place in the education section and commitment to this ongoing partnership.

In one of the most significant periods of upheaval in education, debate around collaboration centres too much on structure and too little on the substance and purpose of education. Instead, says Marie-Claire Bretherton, it should revolve around the quality and purpose of school partnerships



MARIE-CLAIRE BREThERTON

Head of Kyra Teaching School Alliance and executive headteacher of three Lincoln primaries

Why don't we care about the purpose of education?

Earlier this year, our Lincolnshire teaching school alliance submitted evidence to the education select committee on the purpose and quality of education.

Amazingly, given the importance of the question, we were among just a handful of schools and school groups to respond to the committee's call for evidence – a response in sharp contrast to the recent high-profile debate around multi-academy trusts (MATs).

For me this underlined the problem with our current educational debates.

We face the most significant period of reconfiguration, upheaval and potential distraction in the history of our education system, yet in our discussions and debate around collaboration, partnerships, MATs, teaching schools and other groupings we talk too much about structure and too little about the substance and purpose of education.

This obsession risks taking us away from understanding and pursuing education systems, local and national, that truly make a difference for all children.

It's not just the government's fault. The tone of conversation entered into by some sections of the media and, indeed some

in the profession – reactive, fearful and mechanistic – shares the blame. Some of this is understandable, but it is not going to help us to create a better system.

This lack of focus on the "why" – the purpose of our education system and the outcomes we all want to achieve for children – can really undermine the partnerships that we all now need to create. The debate should really be revolving around the quality and purpose of our school partnerships.

School collaborations have been tried in the past but often have been inadequate. Many lacked long-term impact because one or more of the fundamentals of true partnership, such as a shared sense of purpose, self-generated accountability and challenge, bespoke support, permanence and sustainability, were missing.

The alternative is coalition. This is about shared vision and values, shared accountability and leadership, strong governance and a

genuine commitment to partnership, with lots of constructive challenge and support between schools. And they are less likely to be a flash in the pan.

One way to do this is to hold a development day where discussions around structures and processes are avoided. Instead, heads are encouraged to talk about the values and vision for education and what they want to achieve for children and young people.

When we did this, many heads described it as the most profound discussion around education and leadership they had had in their careers.

We realised that we faced many of the same challenges, had many common ambitions, and that we wanted to make an even bigger difference – together.

That discussion gave us a strong platform to thrash out our commitments and promises to one another around "how" we were

going to achieve the "why".

Passion and participation is vital but it is not enough by itself; partnerships need to make a practical difference. As leaders within a partnership we need to challenge each other and ask ourselves what the impact of our work has been, and hold each other to account.

Measures can include the impact of school-to-school support, particularly for schools in difficult circumstances; the quality of staff professional development and "reach" in terms of isolated schools and schools in

Coalitions are less likely to be a flash in the pan

challenging circumstances.

The most crucial thing about these commitments is that we make them public and report against those targets.

As leaders, modelling our ambition, purpose and our willingness to being held to account is crucial if we are to create partnerships of education professionals that have real impact on children's lives.

We need to move beyond collaborations and towards coalition. And if we make sure that they are founded on shared vision and values we can steer the education system firmly back on track.

The Kyra Teaching School Alliance is a group of 51 nursery, infant, junior and primary schools across Lincolnshire

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The aim of this event is to open up the spirit of liberal humanist self-education to those on the cusp of university – whether in sixth form, FE college or on a gap year - to give them a taste of 'university as it should be'.

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REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS
OF THE WEEK

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Our blog reviewer of the week is Harry Fletcher-Wood, associate director of knowledge development for TeachFirst

Shut up about Harvard

By Ben Casselman

This post could just as well be written for the British system. Ben Casselman decries “the annual flood of stories that badly misrepresent what higher education looks like for most American students – and skew the public debate over everything from student debt to the purpose of college in the process.” He identifies a range of misconceptions: young people do not actually “spend months visiting colleges; writing essays; wrangling letters of recommendation; and practising, taking and retaking an alphabet soup of ACTs, SATs and AP exams.” For most, college does not mean “living in dorms, going to parties, studying English (or maybe pre-med) and emerging four years later with a degree and an unpaid internship”. This is “increasingly disconnected from reality” as more attend local universities, study part-time and are aged over 25. The result of this obsession, driven by journalists’ own academic histories, is that the challenges students face are overlooked: such as cuts to state funding of local colleges and very low completion rates. This tightly argued and well evidenced piece may cast our own priorities in a new light.

The transition to parenthood . . . learning to struggle, learning to be “good enough”

By Emma Kell

“If I ever had to torture someone, I would deprive them of sleep,” Kell notes, as she describes her first year back teaching after having her first child as a “blur”. “The results weren’t great that

year . . . I can’t imagine quite why.” Kell’s biggest shock was learning that “after torturing myself with guilt for years at the shortest of absences, they had continued to function just fine without me”. In her second maternity leave, however, this “knowledge was actually a comfort”. Her most important realisation came when a friend introduced her to the concept of Good Enough. “It was like a liberation.” She learned to worry less about what she had left undone, but also “to say ‘no’ to unreasonable demands. If I had to leave at 4 to pick up my kids, that was just the way it was. I gradually let go of what I observe to be the biggest scourge amongst many of the most talented teachers I know – perfectionism.”

But everyone else is doing it – children, cheating and SATs

Anonymous

This blogger recounts the biggest challenge of SATs week: the “everyone else is doing it’ approach to barefaced cheating”. Problems began on Monday, when “I naively admitted to colleagues that, when circling the exam hall, I saw some children had made careless errors”. Suggestions of what to do ranged from “Just tap the table’ to ‘Put your finger on the question where there’s an error’ to ‘Crouch down and whisper to them that they’ve made a mistake on question x’. In fact, the entire senior management have separately ‘checked’ with me that I have been . . . ensuring no silly errors have slipped through’ and that I have been ‘pointing out mistakes to the children.’”

At the end of the week, he/she then learned he/she was also expected to add further support to children’s writing assessments: “The expectation is that their work will be rewritten and, in the process, heavily edited by me in order that all children will pass the floor test, whether or not they have the skills and ability to pass the floor test.”

The odd mirth of failing my masters degree

By Jonny Walker

In this engaging and instructive post, Jonny Walker discusses the experience of having “actively failed in quite a profound way”. He details an academically successful career that ran right up to beginning work on his dissertation. Yet he has recently concluded: “I simply cannot get it done to the standard I would be happy with. I have barely enough time just with my regular job at school. Something’s gotta give. That something is my masters, which I have invested thousands of pounds in.” Walker takes this step wholeheartedly, however, recognising that he could continue down an academic route “gathering a range of abbreviated suffixes” that would “placate” him nicely. But this would not be “ultimately’ making me happy”. Ultimately, “a spoonful of failure is the best medicine”.

BOOK REVIEW

I Find That Offensive

Author Claire Fox

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Reviewer Lucy Rycroft-Smith,
freelance writer



Free speech, Claire Fox says, means allowing people to hold and express racist, sexist and homophobic views.

It means not clamouring for an apology every time an institution falls foul of mollycoddling its “customers”. It means public figures being allowed to stay silent on public issues as well as expressing (a wide range of) views about them. It means people can wear a black face, Native American headdresses, or make culturally stereotypical references. Or, in Fox’s words, “being a Gamergate supporter or being infamous for scathing, sharp-tongued and unapologetic attacks

on PC feminists, even calling them bullies, are perfectly legitimate political opinions”. Ouch.

Is it this simple? Of course not. This book, as Fox readily admits, is about a paradox. We are a society developing away from discrimination and towards understanding privilege more than at any other time in history. We have more possibilities for people to debate and disturb new ideas than ever before. Yet, in our legitimate fight against prejudice and bigotry, we have also been swept along on a tide of linguistic narrowing, victimhood, and extreme sensitivity to mental trauma (defined, crucially, by the receiver).

We have a network of communication that allows us to discuss vital social and global issues instantaneously – and it is more often than not used to silence or harass. Opinions that are not fashionable can get you sacked. But while we can often agree on what isn’t acceptable – some opinions are ill-informed, illogical, or abusive – this is not a clear line. Narrowing the goalposts of what is acceptable means almost everyone at some time will speak or write out of turn. Should they apologise? Grovel? Resign? Does this affect their ability to do their job, to teach?

Free speech does not mean everyone’s opinion is equally important. But it does mean offence will happen as a by-product of uncomfortable ideas. Fox argues that we have bred a narcissistic generation completely unaccustomed to solving problems on their own and who have been brought up to think

that their self-esteem and right to protection from mental trauma is more important than almost anything else. She cites examples of students weeping and demanding consequences as a result of hearing views they find offensive, and lays blame squarely at the previous generation’s door for their part in raising Generation Snowflake.

I began by reading this book like an errant teenager with a borrowed soft-porn novel. It seemed deliciously rebellious to consider that students worried about the Rhodes statue should simply “grow up, sod off and realise that airbrushing history is the not the way smart young people should react to complicated events of the past”.

But I applauded its sound logic, which calls out the mollycoddling of young people that has led to the near criminalisation of the offence of causing psychological harm. Something feels wrong when students are demanding “safe spaces” and shutting down debates because of the “threat” of words and views.

This a brave book, and Fox shows she has intellectual balls in spades by dealing with

international terrorism as well as Twitter witch-hunts, the government’s anti-bullying campaign as well as feminist in-fighting. She calls for an end to “hounding”, astutely exploring the idea that we are all just endlessly turning the intellectual tables on each other by claiming victimhood and competing for attention by using what’s convenient and omitting what isn’t. This, she asserts, “weakens the case for arguments based on political principles, objective analysis and philosophical insights”.

Particularly brave is the criticism of teachers, parents and media who have emphasised the lifelong harm that bullying can do to children and their relentless focus on self-esteem, which will be unpopular to the point of sacrilege with some.

But the final chapter – a letter full of advice – is simple and touching, and a lovely contrast to the cynicism of the first two. In it, Fox says: “develop your own philosophy of freedom . . . one that disentangles radicalism and progressive fights for equality and justice.”

If you’re someone prepared to confront your own world view at every turn, you’ll enjoy this book. If not, you might find it difficult reading.



NEXT WEEK
The Life Project
by Helen Pearson
Reviewed by Cath Murray

What have you been working on?

A study on language impairment at school entry age, and how we can better identify, diagnose and treat language disorders.

Using a sample of 7,267 state school children in Surrey, we assessed language, non-verbal IQ (NVIQ), social, emotional, and behavioural problems among 529 pupils aged 5 to 6.

The study also compared the severity of language disorders in children with both average and low-average NVIQ.

What have you found?

On average, about two children in every year 1 class have a clinically significant language disorder that impacts their learning.

This means that language disorders are about seven times more prevalent than the estimates for other developmental conditions, such as autism. When we included pupils with varying non-verbal IQs, the prevalence estimate increased 50 per cent (to 7.58 rather than 4.8 per cent, which only includes those with NVIQ scores in the normal range).

Our sample did not include children from special needs schools and all were from a relatively affluent area, so the real figures may actually be higher.

We also found that children with low-average IQ scores did not generally experience more severe language deficits, educational difficulties, or social,

RESEARCH CORNER**Q&A****DR COURTENAY NORBURY**

Professor of developmental language and communication disorders, University College London



NON-VERBAL IQ SHOULDN'T BE AN EXCLUSION CRITERION FOR LANGUAGE DISORDER

emotional and behavioural problems than those who scored in the average range.

What does this mean?

The children we identified as having language disorder had higher social, emotional and behavioural problems, and 88 per cent failed to achieve early curriculum targets.

But crucially, our second finding means the diagnostic process for language disorders is flawed, and IQ shouldn't be used as a cut-off for speech-language therapy support.

What is the current diagnostic process?

Schools will notice that a child is struggling with language at school – he or she might not understand

instructions in the same way as other children, and will likely have reading problems.

The school's special educational needs coordinator will then refer the child to a speech and language therapist. Language disorder is diagnosed when language skills (vocabulary, grammar and story-telling skills) are not developing as expected. Often, clinicians are looking for a gap between verbal and non-verbal abilities.

Children just below the "normal" non-verbal IQ range will often not be considered to have a "specific" language disorder, so may not meet eligibility for speech and language therapy.

But they may not qualify for services for children with learning disabilities either, as their NVIQ is not impaired enough. In other words, there is a gap.

What's the problem with this process?

It's not an evidence-based decision!

NVIQ should not be the factor that determines whether or not you get speech and language therapy.

The fifth revision of the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5) removed the need for "normal" NVIQ in language disorder diagnoses. However, a below-average score is still the most common criterion used to exclude children from access to specialist help.

This definition creates a group of children with considerable language needs who fall between diagnostic categories; it leaves children with both verbal and non-verbal difficulties at a double disadvantage, with limited specialist support.

Where does the change need to happen?

First, there needs to be recognition that the evidence does not support using non-verbal IQ as an exclusion criterion for language disorder.

Schools also need to understand that some of the problems they are seeing in behaviour, learning and literacy development may be due to an underlying oral language problem.

Specialist support should be available according to language needs. Good services will see speech and language therapy working together with schools, in partnership.



A week in Westminster

Your regular guide to what's going on in central government

FRIDAY:

Another Friday, more financial notices to improve from the DfE. See pages 5 and 7.

SATURDAY:

A *Guardian* interview today with Natasha Devon, the government's recently axed mental health tsar, gave a fascinating insight into her relationship (or lack thereof) with the department.

According to her, it consisted mostly of DfE officials stalking her Twitter account and calling to tell her off for misdemeanours – swearing, suggesting Sir Ken Robinson become education secretary, criticism of the department, you know the sort of thing.

In fact, Devon says this was pretty much the only time she got to speak with officials. She's now lodged a freedom of information (FOI) request to find out if anyone from the DfE was monitoring her Twitter feed.

MONDAY:

Speaking of FOIs, a little birdie told WiW today an intriguing tale about Rachel Wolf, David Cameron's education adviser and former chief of the US education division of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

The interested party had asked the Cabinet Office under FOI for a list of who Wolf, in her new role, had held official meetings with – a pretty straightforward question.

Names of people and organisations that special advisers (SpAds) meet are routinely published; in fact, this was the reason the Cabinet Office refused the request. It said it didn't need to release the data because it would do so at a further date.

However that data – which also includes gifts and hospitality given to SpAds – has now been published for October to December.

Lo and behold, Wolf was not included. Meanwhile, our informant still awaits the

results of an internal review into the Cabinet Office's refusal – three months on.

Is someone afraid of the Wolf?

WEDNESDAY:

The Queen made her annual trip to parliament today to read out a list of policies for the next year (written for her by the government).

But despite all the pomp and circumstance, and her extra-special state crown, she didn't tell us anything that we didn't already know about the Tories' plans for education.

But, wait! The prison system is to be overhauled, with powers devolved to prison governors and institutions. That sounds familiar.

Here we Gove again.

Yup, you got it, former education, now justice secretary Michael Gove wants to turn prisons into academies. Do we foresee a chain called Porridge?

Among his ideas is Prison Direct, a training scheme for vocational teachers. So, the government can't find enough teachers for schools, but somehow expects to magic up enough to do their training in prisons?

A Teach First idea for prisons is also on the cards; what's that going to be called? Teach First – Offend Later?

Meanwhile, regional school commissioners (RSCs) seem super keen to talk to anyone who will listen and are being wheeled out at specially organised events to extol the virtues of academisation.

Schools Week asked to interview Pank Patel, West Midlands RSC, at a school leaders' conference in Worcestershire today.

Imagine our disappointment when we were told his office had turned down our request. National schools commissioner Sir David Carter, also at the event, didn't even bother to respond to our interview request.

Don't worry, we're hardened to this sort of rejection. But, at least it looks like the new era of RSC transparency is off with a bang.

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEEK FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS

School Bulletin



From left: illustrator Alan Rogers and author Ian Whybrow chat with children at the launch of The Cambridge Reading Adventures at the Institute of Education in London

Book series for all abilities

Cambridge University Press has launched a new primary school reading scheme in a bid to get pupils more excited about books.

Cambridge Reading Adventures, created in partnership with the Institute of Education (IoE), features 90 titles split into 11 different bands for pupils of all abilities.

Designed around a child-centred pedagogy, it includes fictional tales, historically based stories and animal adventures by authors such as Lauri Kubuitsile, Jonathan and Angela Scott and Ian Whybrow.

Glen Franklin, one of the editors from the IoE, says: "Cambridge Reading Adventures doesn't just focus on stories; half the series features non-fiction books with a variety of titles to suit primary school pupils' interests, whether that be finding out about dinosaurs, the environment, or even modern technologies in developing countries."

Sue Bodman, another IoE editor, added: "Each of the fiction books has a strong character presence, human or animal, which should allow reading to be enjoyable for our young learners."

Academy's high-level success

It was mission accomplished for three Fakenham Academy Norfolk students who launched a high altitude balloon into near space.

After months of planning and preparation – and one postponement because of poor weather – the group's helium-filled latex balloon, FANHAB1, reached 26,533m.

The students launched it from Elsworth in Cambridgeshire where FANHAB1 climbed steadily for exactly 80 minutes.

The balloon reached about 26km above the Earth's surface where its on-board camera captured images of the planet's curve.

Brandon Archer, Chloe English and Charlie De Jong Cleyndert launched the balloon with Sue Gray, their IT teacher, and were able to follow its progress from the ground as its "payload" contained a Raspberry Pi computer and tracking boards.

Charlie says: "Launching the balloon was awesome. Filling it with helium was the most exciting, but scary, thing. I had to hold the balloon in case it decided to fly away. Because the balloon was so thin, a bit of grass, or my hair, could have popped it."



From left: students Charlie De Jong Cleyndert, Chloe English, IT teacher Sue Gray, and Brandon Archer

Asher stands up to the challenge

FEATURED

An 11-year-old pupil from Nottingham, who suffers from a severe visual impairment after treatment for three brain tumours, is attempting a three-mile solo paddleboard for three charities close to his heart.

Asher Jenkin Jones of The Elms junior school plans to paddleboard from Caldey Island, off the south west coast of Wales, into the harbour in Tenby to raise money for the RNLI, Royal National Institute of Blind People and the Children's Brain Tumour Research Centre (CBTRC).

Asher was diagnosed with three brain tumours when he was ten months old. He received treatment at the CBTRC with major surgery to remove one tumour, followed by three years of chemotherapy.

His tumours left him with a severe visual impairment but he says he lives life to the full by enjoying activities such as skiing, judo, and goal ball.

"I want to show everyone that people who have disabilities can do great things, and I want to encourage other people who have my kind of disability to try new things," he says.

"I don't want people to underestimate what I can do. Not falling into the water is going to be the hardest thing but I've been practising and I'm just looking forward to doing it now."

Tony, Asher's father, says the HeadSmart Campaign, which aims to reduce the time it takes to diagnose



Getting ready: Asher Jenkin Jones on the River Trent training for his paddleboard challenge

Picture: Alex Wilkinson

young people with brain tumours, developed by Professor David Walker at the CBTRC, helped Asher early on.

"We were fortunate enough to have had an early diagnosis and I'm sure that has had an enormous impact on Asher's life. Treatment ensured the brain tumour stopped growing and is not currently life-threatening but we couldn't save much of his sight.

"Asher amazes everyone he meets. People see his abilities rather than his disabilities, what he can do not what he can't do. His positive attitude and bubbly

personality mean that they soon forget he has a disability at all. He has a host of interests and has just got a distinction in his guitar exams. Nothing holds this boy back. He doesn't accept his boundaries."

Asher added: "I'd like to help as many people as I possibly can. Doing this challenge may get people talking about children with disabilities and what we are capable of achieving."

Visit www.facebook.com/asherpaddleboardchallenge to support Asher's challenge



HUMANISM RESOURCES

Resources designed to help pupils learn about humanism have been launched following a High Court ruling last year that non-religious views must be included in religious education.

Created by the British Humanist Association (BHA), the Understanding Humanism website includes lesson plans, presentations, classroom activities, videos and humanist perspectives.

From September, schools will be required to include non-religious views, such as humanism, in RE after a High Court ruling said the state must "accord equal respect to different religious convictions, and to non-religious beliefs".

Luke Donnellan, head of education at the BHA, says: "We are aware that many teachers feel under-resourced when it comes to humanism. These new resources have been designed with teachers in mind, so that more young people than ever can explore how non-religious people find meaning and happiness in their lives."

Visit www.understandinghumanism.org.uk/ to access the resources

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new and who's leaving

Chloe Smith, the Conservative MP for Norwich North, has joined the advisory council of Future First.

She says she will work with the charity, which aims to build alumni networks in state schools, to "develop students' confidence to succeed in their chosen career and inspire them to work hard in school now.

"We know that in the modern jobs market strong networks are vital to getting ahead. Historically private schools students have benefited from a strong alumni.

"We need to work hard to ensure state school students have the same access to this opportunity. This is what social mobility is all about."

Smith, who studied English at the University of York, has been the MP for Norwich North since 2009. She formerly worked for Deloitte, an international consultancy firm that advises private businesses, government departments and public bodies.

She has also been a treasury minister, and serves on the Conservative party board, and as the party chairman's parliamentary adviser.

Katie Paxton-Doggett has taken over as the new head of governance at Wellington



Chloe Smith



Katie Paxton-Doggett



Daniel Grewcock

College Academy Trust.

A solicitor and chartered secretary, she previously worked as a freelance retainer to a number of schools before joining Wellington at the beginning of May.

Paxton-Doggett says her new role is about making governance "an integral part" of the trust so that it "actually contributes to making the academy excellent in every area".

She says: "If you can have the governance

underpinning everything then the ultimate goal is that all of the schools will become outstanding."

Paxton-Doggett completed a degree in philosophy with linguistics at the University of Southampton before studying at the College of Law.

She is also a writer, publishing *How to Run an Academy School* in 2014.

Daniel Grewcock, academy director at Bath Rugby Academy and a former England international rugby player, has been appointed as the new director of sport at Oundle School. Before his move into education, he played for Coventry, Saracens and then Bath.

He has 69 England caps, was selected for two British Lions tours and was awarded the MBE for his services to rugby.

He says at Oundle he will lead in all aspects of both traditional team and individual sports to develop pupils' healthy lifestyles so that they "succeed personally in their chosen sporting direction.

"I will be ensuring that sport continues to be an exciting, enjoyable and vital part of the balanced programme.

"I have had an unbelievable time at Bath – both as a player and in the role of academy director – and have learnt a great deal over the past five years. I feel strongly about helping to develop young athletes, and am thankful that I have the opportunity to continue doing this at Oundle."

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your school, local authority or organisation please let us know by emailing news@schoolsweek.co.uk

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PARMITER'S SCHOOL

founded 1681

Co-educational Academy

Roll: 1360, 370 in academic Sixth Form



TEACHER OF MATHEMATICS

Part time (0.5 or 0.6fte preferred)

Salary: MPS/UPS plus London Fringe Allowance

Closing Date: Monday 23 May, but early applications would be welcome.

Required for September 2016, to join an experienced and extremely successful team in this popular school. This post offers an excellent opportunity for an ambitious, well qualified teacher committed to achieving high standards.

Examination results in Mathematics are outstanding: 93% A*-C at GCSE and 74% A*/A at A Level in 2015. Of the 22 Further Mathematics students, 13 gained an A* grade. Currently there are 55 students studying Further Mathematics and 164 studying A Level Mathematics in Years 12 and 13.

Parmiter's is an exceptional school in which to teach, with highly positive and supportive relationships between the staff and students. Academic achievements are very high and extra-curricular activities are varied and exciting. Our last Ofsted inspection found Parmiter's to be "an outstanding school with an outstanding Sixth Form".

Applications are equally welcome from experienced and newly qualified teachers. NQTs are offered the option of a 1st July start date and we have an active NQT programme to support and develop new teachers.

Application forms, available from the school website, should be returned with a covering letter to the Headmaster, Mr N Daymond, Parmiter's School, High Elms Lane, Garston, Nr Watford, Herts WD25 0UU or by email to the address below.

Telephone: 01923 671424
Email: admin@parmiters.herts.sch.uk
Website: www.parmiters.herts.sch.uk

Parmiter's School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening, including checks with past employers and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Nursery Teacher

CLOSING DATE: Monday 6th June 2016 midday

Contract: Full time, Permanent

Location: Birmingham



Are you an outstanding and dedicated classroom practitioner who is passionate about making a difference?

We recently came out of special measures, requiring improvement but with good for leadership and behaviour. We are looking for a Nursery teacher to help us continue this school improvement journey to good and beyond. The recent Ofsted stated "Mansfield Green pupils work hard and behave well and staff at all levels share the ambition of the Principal to make sure the pupils do as well as they can".

The successful candidate must be committed to improving the outcomes of our young pupils, have excellent knowledge of the EYFS statutory framework which will enable you to deliver high quality teaching and learning experiences which excite and motivate children to learn and develop, a teacher who is passionate about early years education, a commitment to challenging children abilities by having high expectations and the ability to make use of electronic assessment tools for observations.

In addition the successful candidate must be an experienced class teacher who can demonstrate a record of success in raising children's attainment. They will be able to work in a creative and inspirational way, be able to inspire, challenge and motivate all children to achieve; and lead nursery colleagues by supporting them to accomplish the best possible outcomes.

If you would like to discuss this post in more detail or visit the academy please contact the Principal's PA, Sajdah Khanam on 0121 464 6590.

CLOSING DATE: Monday 6th June 2016 midday

If you have not received a reply within 14-16 days you may assume you have been unsuccessful on this occasion.

The Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be required to have an enhanced criminal record check via the DBS. All appointments must be registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

For further details and an application pack please visit our website www.mgeact.org

Please send your completed application forms to recruitment@mgeact.org

Please note we will only accept applications submitted on an E-ACT application form. We will not accept CV's.

INTERVIEWS: w/c 20th June 2016

(Two) Class Teachers - Year 2 & Year 4

NQTs are encouraged to apply

CLOSING DATE: Monday 6th June 2016 midday

Contract: Full time, Permanent

Location: Birmingham

Mansfield Green is a two-form entry academy. We are a multi-cultural academy working to improve the outcomes for our children and community. We have friendly, enthusiastic, well-mannered pupils who take pride in their work as noted recently by Ofsted.

At Mansfield Green we set the highest standards in the work we do with our children. We are looking for a hardworking and dedicated NQT to join our motivated school team. We are looking to appoint someone who is an effective role model who shares our values of 'Believe, Achieve, Succeed', incorporating the highest expectations of educational standards in their daily practice.

You will:

- Work with enthusiastic, well-behaved children.
- Be part of a high performing team, where our children are at the centre of everything we do.
- Engage in a wide range of CPD and coaching, including a comprehensive NQT programme working alongside other professionals within the E-ACT group.
- Contribute and have an impact on further developing our whole school curriculum & embedding our work through Talk 4 Writing & an innovative approach to Maths teaching.
- Inspire our pupils to excel, to meet their full potential & foster a love of learning.
- Work in a school where reflection and impact are key.
- Be passionate about using new technologies including Google for Education & iPads to enhance our educational provision.

If you are interested in applying, please submit an application form together with a covering letter that explains your interest in the role and your relevant experience to recruitment@mgeact.org

Interested? If you would like to arrange a visit, please contact Sajdah Khanam, Principal's PA on 0121 464 6590.

A detailed Job Description and Person Specification are available at www.mgeact.org

INTERVIEW DATE: w/c 20th June 2016

Mansfield Green E-ACT Primary Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be required to complete a Disclosure Barring Service form in line with Section 115 of the Police Act 1997.



Reception Teacher

Location: Birmingham

Closing Date: Monday 6th June 2016 midday

Contract: Full time, One Year Fixed Term Contract to cover maternity leave

Are you an outstanding and dedicated classroom practitioner who is passionate about making a difference?

We recently came out of special measures, requiring improvement but with good for leadership and behaviour. We are looking for a Reception teacher to help us continue this school improvement journey to good and beyond. The recent Ofsted stated "Mansfield Green pupils work hard and behave well and staff at all levels share the ambition of the Principal to make sure the pupils do as well as they can".

The successful candidate must be committed to improving the outcomes of our young pupils. We are committed to developing all of our staff and we work closely alongside National Leaders in Education to rapidly improve the educational provision for our children.

We are looking for someone who can deliver high quality lessons, demonstrating consistently good or better teaching. The successful candidate must be an experienced class teacher who can demonstrate a record of success in raising children's attainment. They will be able to work in a creative and inspirational way, be able to inspire, challenge and motivate all children to achieve, have a commitment to working strategically as part of a team to improve standards of teaching and learning.

This role focuses on providing high quality education for all children and continuous improvement in standards of learning and achievement. The successful candidate must have a passion for learning and high expectations for all children.

If you would like to discuss this post in more detail or visit the academy please contact the Principal's PA, Sajdah Khanam on 0121 464 6590.

CLOSING DATE: Monday 6th June 2016 midday

If you have not received a reply within 14-16 days you may assume you have been unsuccessful on this occasion.

The Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be required to have an enhanced criminal record check via the DBS. All appointments must be registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

For further details and an application pack please visit our website www.mgeact.org

Please send your completed application forms to recruitment@mgeact.org

Please note we will only accept applications submitted on an E-ACT application form. We will not accept CV's.

INTERVIEWS: w/c 20th June 2016



VACANCIES



MEMBERSHIPS MANAGER

Location: Central London

Salary: £20,000 - £30,000 based on experience

Permanent Role - Start date: Ideally we would like the successful applicant to start as soon as possible.

Role Description

The successful candidate will work closely with headteachers and other senior leaders as well as the Challenge Partners central staff team to ensure that all members of Challenge Partners are engaged locally and nationally with all aspects Challenge Partners offers. The Memberships Manager works closely with the Senior Partners (executive headteachers, headteachers and Multi-Academy Trust CEOs) and local area Hub Leaders (usually deputy headteachers and/or Teaching School Directors) to ensure they are clear on and deliver on their roles and responsibilities.

The Memberships Manager will work with the local area Hub Leaders to make sure every member school is engaged in their local Hub and takes advantage of what the national Partnership has to offer. Through the Memberships Manager's efforts we will see a high membership renewal rate among our existing members, good engagement rates in local and national activity and also growth in our membership nationally.

The position requires a self-motivated, responsible and highly organised individual with outstanding written and oral communication skills. You will have excellent relationship management skills and will work as part of a growing team. The successful candidate will have experience of account management, business development and/or relationship management within the education sector or similar.

Key Responsibilities:

The duties and responsibilities of the Memberships Manager will include

- Recruitment and induction of members
- Account management
- Communications and marketing
- Data management
- Teamwork

If you would like to be part of our team, please send your CV and covering letter to Penny Rabiger, Head of Network Development, describing your suitability for the role.

Closing Date: 23rd May, 2016

Contact: penny.rabiger@challengepartners.org - For more information on the role and to apply.

PROGRAMME COORDINATOR/ PROGRAMME MANAGER

Location: London

Salary: £20,000 - £30,000 per annum based on experience

This is a full-time, office-based role with some travel nationally.

The deadline for applications is Monday 6th June 2016

Role Description

The successful candidate will also play a key role in capturing the impact of the programme; through both quantitative data collection and analysis, as well as through identifying and capturing effective practice emerging through the programme, enabling it to be shared with schools across the programme. This enables schools on the programme to learn from each other, whilst also demonstrating the credibility of Challenge the Gap to support the programme's growth to new areas and more schools.

Key Responsibilities:

The duties and responsibilities of the Programme Coordinator/ Programme Manager (dependent on experience), Challenge the Gap will include:

- Programme Management
- Marketing and communications
- Education Research
- Impact Evaluation
- Recruitment & Sign Ups
- Challenge Partners

If you would like to be part of our team, please send your CV and covering letter to Jess Talbot, Head of Challenge the Gap Programme, describing your suitability for the role.

Closing Date: 6th June, 2016

Contact: jess.talbot@challengepartners.org - For more information on the role and to apply.

Our team is very important to us, and we are looking for someone who shares our key values:

- Teamwork
- Pursuit of excellence
- Challenge Partners family
- Trust and transparency
- Creative freedom

Benefits of working for Challenge Partners

- 25 days of paid holiday per year, plus 8 additional days of bank holiday
- An employer contributed pension - we match up to 5% of your own contribution
- Flexible working hours
- Central London office location at Waterloo, minutes' walk from the Southbank, with views over London. It is a spacious, comfortable and friendly office environment, shared with another educational social enterprise
- A supportive and friendly team
- A chance to make a real difference to educational outcomes
- The opportunity to progress and develop skills in a young and fast-growing team

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Join us for an invigorating day of practical workshops and engage with leading writers and practitioners including international bestselling author Kazuo Ishiguro and Executive Head teacher Geoff Barton.

For more information or to book your place ocr.org.uk/gcseenglishconf2016

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SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

		2	8	3	9	4		
	3		5		2		8	
5			7		8			3
	7						9	
	1			4			2	
4	2						5	6
		6	2	9	1	3		

Difficulty:
EASY

		2						
9		3			7			5
				2		4	9	7
				1	9	8		
	1		7		8			
				3	5	1		
				9		7	6	5
8		9			1		2	
		5						

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Last Week's solutions

7	5	8	9	2	1	3	6	4
4	1	9	6	8	3	2	7	5
2	6	3	5	7	4	1	9	8
8	3	1	4	9	5	7	2	6
6	7	2	3	1	8	4	5	9
5	9	4	7	6	2	8	3	1
9	4	6	1	3	7	5	8	2
3	8	5	2	4	9	6	1	7
1	2	7	8	5	6	9	4	3

Difficulty:
EASY

4	7	2	6	1	3	9	5	8
9	5	6	8	7	2	1	4	3
3	1	8	4	5	9	6	2	7
1	9	4	7	6	5	3	8	2
6	3	5	2	4	8	7	1	9
8	2	7	9	3	1	5	6	4
2	6	3	1	8	7	4	9	5
5	8	1	3	9	4	2	7	6
7	4	9	5	2	6	8	3	1

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference to WIN a *Schools Week* mug



What's the caption? tweet a caption @schoolsweek



Spot five differences. First correct entry wins a mug. Tweet a picture of your completed spot the difference using @schoolsweek in the tweet.