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Credit: AELTC/Chris Rahnhael

Delayed Ofsted visits save more than £3m

- School leaders blame the struggle to recruit inspectors
- "Underspends are never looked on fondly in Whitehall"

SOPHIE SCOTT
@SOPH_E_SCOTT

Investigates

Ofsted has saved more than £3 million this year by delaying inspections, amid concerns about the lack of available inspectors.

Schools Week can reveal that board minutes published by the education watchdog this week show it is forecasting an underspend of £3.1 million.

The document states this is largely down to

"the decision to have a slow start in the autumn term to allow more time for management of [new frameworks]".

But school leaders say that a struggle to recruit new staff is holding back inspections at some schools.

Last year the inspectorate announced it would not renew contracts with external providers, which previously provided additional inspectors.

Data obtained by Schools Week from Watchsted reveals more than

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TONY SEWELL

“My role models were white middle-class kids”

P12



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An Alternative White Paper

JULY 1, 2016 | 09:30 TO 16:00 | SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND - SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

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NEWS

Delayed Ofsted visits save more than £3m

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CONTINUED FROM FRONT

1,000 fewer school inspections so far this year, compared with the same period last year.

An Ofsted spokesperson told *Schools Week* it "remains confident" its staffing ensures schools will receive inspections within published timelines.

But Jonathan Simons, head of education at think tank Policy Exchange, said: "Underspends are never looked on fondly in Whitehall – they tend to be seen less as an organisation having saved money and more as an issue of it not doing what parliament has allocated it taxpayers' money for."

Ofsted claims the drop was due to allowances made for the implementation of the new framework, introduced in September.

Board minutes for April, published on Monday, added that the appropriate financial planning for 2016-17 should "ensure the avoidance of such a large underspend in the future".

However, insiders say that inspectors have been told they are not needed for inspections, and then called at the last minute to visit schools.

One headteacher, who wanted to remain anonymous, said: "There are definitely recruitment problems. People are waiting too long and I don't think it is just because of the new framework."

Other heads said that schools requiring improvement have been waiting much longer than the expected timeframe for a reinspection.

Rob Campbell, headteacher of Impington Village college, Cambridge, and executive



principal of Impington Education Trust, said, while his school has had no issues, he has heard of problems elsewhere.

"There do seem to be a number of schools near me that have been waiting a long time. A middle school has gone four or five months past when they should have been done.

"I think we were deliberately targeted because of our results for pupil premium kids. When they want to go to a school, they will prioritise, but inevitably someone else will get pushed off the agenda."

Analysis by *Schools Week* shows that as of Wednesday, Ofsted had carried out 1,745 section 5 inspections. By the same date last year, 2,797 reports had been published.

By the end of the 2014-15 academic year, the inspectorate had undertaken 4,691 section 5 inspections.

An Ofsted spokesperson said this was

down to the introduction of the new "short" inspections, where good schools are inspected under section 8, instead of full section 5 inspections.

The latest published data from Ofsted shows there have been just 48 section 8 inspections so far this year. In 2014-15, 62 were completed.

In February, Sean Harford, Ofsted national director, confirmed in a blog that schools judged as requires improvement would be reinspected less often under the new framework with "up to 30 months" allowed between reports. Previously only 24 months could pass between inspections.

His post also said as this year was "transitional", good schools would not be in the "three-year cycle" straight away and good schools' first short inspection would be "likely to fall more than three years after its last inspection".

DfE silent on who will get catch-up cash – and how much

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Schools will continue to receive extra money to help pupils who fall behind in reading and maths, but criteria for deciding who will receive the cash – and how much – is still unknown.

The Department for Education confirmed the catch-up premium will continue to be paid to secondary schools in 2016-17, but is still deliberating whether it will maintain the current rate of £500 per pupil.

Secondary schools receive the premium to help to support year 7 pupils who fail to reach the government's "expected standard" – previously a level 4 – in reading and maths by the time they leave primary school.

They can decide how to use the extra money, but government guidance advises them to use it only for programmes they "know are effective", and gives examples such as individual and small-group tuition, external materials and summer schools.

In 2015-16, £46,590,000 was paid to 3,547 schools for 93,180 pupils.

Grants ranged from £3,000 to tens of thousands, with the largest sum going to

Ashington high school sports college in Northumberland, which received £63,000 for 126 eligible pupils.

Education leaders have warned that the number of eligible pupils, and therefore the overall cost of the grants, could rise significantly because of the introduction of new, tougher tests at key stage 2.

They have also expressed concerns about the government's unwillingness to commit to the scheme after 2016-17 as school funding moves towards a national funding formula.

Russell Hobby (pictured), general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said the state of the funding formula was "uncertain at a number of levels", with the catch-up premium one area of uncertainty.

"Given the chaos at the end of key stage 2 at the moment the numbers eligible could spiral significantly."

The introduction of harder tests at both key stages 1 and 2 has been controversial, with prominent politicians unable to answer questions from the key stage 1 spelling and grammar test. The paper was also leaked online, which led to the test's scrapping.

The government's new expectations

for pupils at key stage 2 will not be set out until the results of this summer's tests are known. But the doubt over the future of additional funding is likely to compound the concerns of secondary schools that now also have to deal with compulsory re-sits for year 7 pupils who do not do well enough at primary level.

A spokesperson for the government said ministers had confirmed that the scheme would be continued in 2016-17, but said the amount available for each pupil still formed part of ongoing deliberations.

"We are continuing the year 7 catch-up premium for 2016-17 to support pupils who don't reach the expected standard at key stage 2. We will announce further details in due course."

The spokesperson said secondary schools had a "fundamental responsibility" to support pupils to catch up if they arrived behind their peers, adding that new national funding formula proposals included a plan to take low prior attainment into account when calculating core budgets.

Ministers were currently considering the responses to a consultation on the formula and would publish their response "in due course".

NEWS

Heads roll with the play at Wimbledon

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

Investigates

School leaders have backed their decision to allow pupils two weeks off school to work as ball boys and girls at Wimbledon, despite Nick Gibb's warning that even one week off could have a "significant impact" on grades.

Last month the schools minister said the government would do "everything in its power" to ensure headteachers kept children in school during term time.

His comments followed a high court ruling in favour of Jon Platt, a father who refused to pay a £120 fine for taking his daughter to Disney World during term time.

However, next week more than 250 year 10 pupils will be given their heads' blessings to leave school for two weeks to help tennis stars, including Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic, as ball boys and girls (BBGs) at the annual All England championships.

Leaders running south London schools that participate in the BBG programme told *Schools Week* that the experiences gained by students "far outweighed" the time they missed in the classroom.

Aisha Samad, principal of Harris Academy Merton in Surrey – which has participated as a Wimbledon BBG school since 2007 – said the tournament was an "exceptional circumstance" and that she "would not deny"

her students an "experience of a lifetime".

The All England Club, home to the tournament, puts the 15-year-olds, who are selected from thousands of applicants, through a rigorous training programme from January.

Samad said: "The process disciplines the students and builds their confidence and teamwork skills.

"The enrichment experience over the course of the championship, the people they'll meet, the things they'll see, the interactions that they will have, are something quite amazing."

She also said the tournament would not have a detrimental impact on student work because they were given extra work to compensate for not being on site and participating in lessons.

The Department for Education (DFE) declined to comment on whether or not schools should allow time off for pupils participating in the tournament, but told *Schools Week* that all heads have, by law, the power to permit absence in "exceptional circumstances".

"It is the students' job to organise when and how they get the work done," Samad said. "They know they are at a competition, they know how many hours they're there, but they also know that the schoolwork needs to be done."

Sarah Goldson, a PE teacher from Queen Mary's College in Basingstoke, who has delivered the BBG programme for the past five years, said there was usually a "positive change" in students when they returned to school.

"As a teacher I know how important school is but this has the same value as an educational trip if not more."

Goldson said that some of the students used the two weeks as work experience, adding it to their CVs: "It is a big talking point in interviews, it has all the qualities that make it worthwhile."

Absences during term times have been a live issue for the government after the education department released figures last year showing that GCSE results were lower for children who missed lessons.

At the time, education secretary Nicky Morgan said the data "busted the myth" that taking pupils out of school for a holiday had no impact, but the research did not separate pupils absent for a holiday as



Credit: AELTC/Thomas Lovelock

opposed to activities such as Wimbledon.

Russell Hobby, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said the BBG heads were "balancing the loss of time in lessons with the value of immersion in the values of hard work, aspiration and dedication shown at Wimbledon".

"Each situation is different, and heads will know best the value individuals can derive from the experience."

Heads should beware, however, that the balance may not always fall in their favour on time off for sporting exploits. Last week, a headteacher was forced to u-turn on his decision to allow pupils time off to watch a Euro 2016 match after heavy criticism from parents.

Ofsted's 'double inspection' pilot results due in autumn

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Exclusive

Ofsted will publish the findings of its "double inspections" pilot this autumn.

The education watchdog has trialled "reliability tests" since last spring, after it admitted that it had not done enough in the past to check the reliability of inspectors' judgments.

Double inspections involve two senior inspectors visiting the same school as part of more frequent, but light-touch inspections for schools rated good.

The inspectors determine their own, separate, judgments; the comparability of these results will form a major part of the pilot's findings.

Schools Week previously reported analysis of Ofsted grades by data experts Arbor Education that suggested a lack of consistency when awarding the two most extreme grades, "inadequate" and "outstanding".

The double inspection report should reveal how reliable inspectors are at considering the context and evidence gathered from a school and coming up with the same judgments.

Schools Week asked the education watchdog last month under the Freedom of Information Act to

provide a copy of any reports it had compiled so far.

Ofsted said it had put together an interim report, but refused to release the information as it "intends to publish in autumn 2016... once more testing has taken place".

The double inspections were revealed by *Schools Week* in January last year and followed a critical blog by headteacher Tom Sherrington (pictured).

Its announcement was widely welcomed, but Sherrington warned he expected "frankness" from Ofsted about reliability.

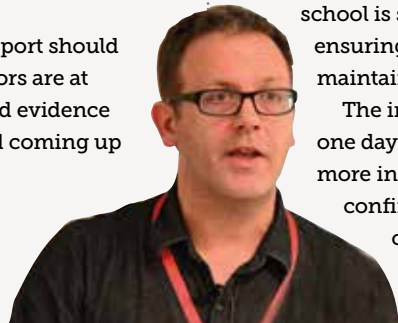
He said at the time: "What I'd then expect is a public report, after the trial, saying what they found from the reliability testing.

"Schools in the trial must not be left without an understanding of what's happening, or how the judgment has been decided."

From last September, Ofsted has inspected schools rated good every three years.

Inspectors start from the premise the school is still good and focus on ensuring those standards are maintained.

The inspections normally last one day. Where inspectors feel more information is needed to confirm their judgment, the visit can be converted to a full inspection and continue for another day.



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NEWS

Look before you leap, warns sixth-form leader

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Sixth-form colleges should not rush into partnerships with schools to create all-through academy trusts, a sector leader has warned.

Schools Week revealed last week how 60 of the 93 sixth-form colleges in England had told the government they were interested in becoming academies. Their interest follows a rule change that allowed the institutions to avoid paying VAT in return for conversion of status.

Fears about the availability of good sponsors for increasing numbers of academies has led to speculation that the government may look to the 16 to 19 institutions — 90 per cent of which are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted — to lead multi-academy trusts.

Like further education colleges, sixth-form colleges can sponsor academies as independent external organisations, but under the rule change they will be able to form and head their own trusts.

Sir Michael Wilshaw, the chief inspector, has previously expressed an aspiration for primary and secondary schools to function together in “all-through” trusts with studio schools, university technical colleges and other 16 to 19 provision.

But Bill Watkin, the former Schools, Students and Teachers network (SSAT) operations boss who now heads the Sixth Form Colleges Association, said although sixth-form colleges were an “invaluable asset” that were “largely underused”, many principals would need to be “more sure” that they could take on schools without affecting their existing provision.

Sir David Carter, the national schools commissioner, admitted during a grilling from MPs last week that identifying new sponsors for schools was a “challenge”, and Wilshaw has warned the government could struggle to find enough good leaders to run trusts.

Watkin accepted that ministers had to look to sixth-form colleges to fuel its need for an “ever-greater number of sponsors.

Watkin said sixth-form colleges were facing two decisions: whether to convert to academy status, and whether to do so as a standalone academy or as part of a multi-academy trust. A decision on whether they would lead trusts would come later for many principals.

“They certainly feel they can make a difference, but what they want to be more sure about is how they can go about making that difference without putting at risk their own college.”

Richard Taunton sixth form college, in Southampton, and St Vincent college, in Gosport, announced earlier this month that they have formed a “working partnership”, with a view to a trust being launched by September 2017. It is not known if they will take on schools.

Watkin said the benefits of establishing trusts would include better opportunities for continuing professional development and the chance to “build a resource that can benefit all institutions”, but that principals would have to consider their lack of expertise in 11 to 16 education and their existing relationships with schools.

There was no “one effective model” for trusts, and he did not share Wilshaw’s view that trusts had to have representation “from across all the stages”.

Exam markers beware: there’s a camera near you

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Examiners should be aware of the dangers of social media after two separate posts on Twitter sparked concerns that exams have been marked in public.

Both tweets showed pictures of papers being marked on trains, with the posters suggesting they were examiners checking current pupils’ exams.

Examiners are in breach of their contract if they break the strict rules that govern the marking of exams in public spaces.

But it appears that at least one of the posts — retweeted more than 600 times — showed the marking of controlled assessments, which do not have the same confidentiality regulations as exam papers.

The exam board whose logo features on the papers captured in the tweet said it would look into the case, but could not confirm if they were “live exam papers”.

The posts prompted warnings for markers about the potential dangers of social media, with exam boards reissuing their guidelines.

Paula Goddard, a senior examiner and fellow of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA), said there were “very few” instances where examiners breached their contracts over marking in public.

But she warned markers to be aware of the rise of camera phones and social media: “Examples where markers are caught doing



something they shouldn’t is probably going to increase. This is a good time to remind people about what they should and shouldn’t be doing.”

Ali McCree, director of the CIEA, said the postings showed a need for more “professional development” for examiners.

But an education consultant, who spoke to *Schools Week* anonymously after noticing one of the tweets, said the picture just seemed to be part of the “general hysteria that year 11s enjoy around the exam period”.

Schools Week approached each of the exam boards to ask if they had ever received reports of examiners marking in public places.

AQA said it did not collect figures. Pearson did not respond. Both OCR and WJEC Eduqas said they had not received any reports this year.

A spokesperson for the latter added: “Our examiners are given comprehensive guidelines that cover topics such as the

marking and storing of scripts.”

The tweets are the latest example of a rise in exam-related posts on social media, with pupils taking to Twitter earlier this year to complain over difficult questions, and exam boards increasingly monitoring social media to find cheating students.

Tim Oates of Cambridge Assessment, writing for *Schools Week* on page 14, said social media had allowed “global circulation of all sorts of conversations that previously would simply have been between two young people outside the exam hall”.

Kunal Gandhi, AQA’s social media manager, said the board was not surprised by the rise in young people sharing views as the platforms were growing in popularity.

“Ultimately, though, we’ve always told the people who work for us that they need to be good ambassadors for AQA — so, as long as they are, the social media revolution shouldn’t cause them any trouble.”

Goddard said exam boards had been “slow to catch up” with developments on social media.

But it is clear that most have upped their social media presence. A spokesperson for OCR said it now had a team “dedicated to digital engagement, while other teams monitor social media for issues such as malpractice.

“Ten years ago an OCR subject specialist would never have been expected to talk to schools and teachers on social media but now it is part and parcel of the job, and everybody uses webinars.

“And, like most large organisations, we are moving away from traditional recruitment and engaging with jobseekers on forums such as LinkedIn. Social media isn’t special anymore; it’s just something you do.”

Free school senior leaders deny fraud charges

The principal, the financial director and a teacher at a flagship free school defrauded the government of £150,000 and treated public money “as their own”, a court has been told.

Sajid Husain Raza, 43, Daud Khan, 44, and Shabana Hussain, 40, are charged with fraudulently obtaining the cash from Department for Education (DfE) grants to set up Kings Science Academy, in Bradford — one of the first wave of free schools to open in 2011 and once praised by David Cameron.

The defendants, all from Bradford, deny the charges.

At the first day of their trial at Leeds Crown Court on Tuesday, Raza, the founder and principal of the school, his sister Hussain, a teacher, and Khan, former finance director, were accused of “paying themselves what they wanted whether they were entitled to it or not”.

The court was told that Raza spent some of the cash on mortgage repayments.

Department for Education (DfE) civil servants had raised concerns, but Raza was allegedly dismissive in meetings — “plucking financial figures from the air”.

He also allegedly threatened to phone Michael Gove, the then education secretary, when challenged over finances. Despite this, he was approved as principal in early 2011.

Simon Kealey, prosecuting, told the jury that in just over three years the defendants

committed fraud by “dishonestly obtaining public money intended for the school”.

“In summary, the prosecution alleges these defendants treated public money as their own, paying themselves what they wanted whether they were entitled to it or not.

“And when challenged to provide proof of expenditure, they created or fabricated documents to cover their tracks.”

He told the court about £150,000 was involved.

The court heard Raza owned several properties, but by 2008 was making mortgage repayments irregularly or via credit card.

In June 2010, he successfully applied to set up a 500-place academy to open in September 2011. A business case grant was then paid to KIFSA Ltd to set up the project.

This money came with strict guidelines on how it should be spent, but there was no provision for salaries. Withdrawals were made by Raza on three occasions, and that money was “simply unaccounted for”.

Payments also went into Hussain’s account with no records as to what it was for.

Khan applied for a grant of more than £196,000 to pay teachers’ salaries, which was approved. It is alleged Raza overpaid himself from this.

Teachers would submit their valid invoices, but then Khan would allegedly write a false invoice that over-inflated the



David Cameron meets children from Kings Science Academy PA/Images

money and submit that instead.

During the trial on Wednesday it was said that vice-principal Khauser Amin-Ali had inaccurate invoices totalling about £2,000 allegedly submitted on his behalf.

Amin-Ali said he had not seen the documents before the police showed them to him. He had not received any money.

During cross-examination by Nicholas Worsley, counsel for Khan, Amin-Ali said that it was “Sajid’s way or the highway”.

Raza is charged with four counts of fraud, three counts of false accounting and two counts of obtaining money transfer by deception.

Hussain is charged with one count of fraud and one count of obtaining property by deception.

Khan is charged with two counts of fraud and three counts of false accounting.

The trial continues.

NEWS

Swedish company lets go of its British schools...

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Exclusive

An academy trust at the forefront of the Swedish free school model much admired by Michael Gove will wind up later this year, *Schools Week* can reveal.

The Learning Schools Trust was set up in 2010 as the UK charitable arm of Kunskapsskolan, a private firm that runs schools in Sweden.

One of the first Swedish school companies to enter the UK state sector it reportedly boasted former education secretary Gove as a "huge admirer".

Sweden's model of state-funded, independently managed schools is said to have formed the blueprint for the Conservative government's reforms.

But the Learning Schools Trust will cease operation in September when its three schools, two in London and one in Milton Keynes, will form new multi-academy trusts with local schools. It already relinquished a fourth school last year.

Lucy Powell, Labour's shadow education secretary, said the trust's "failure underlines the fragility of the multi-academy trust model and highlights the underlying failure in parts of the system".

Before becoming education secretary, Gove announced at a Conservative party conference that he wanted to adopt the Swedish-style free school model and designed England's policy to emulate it.

He mentioned Sweden six times during speeches in his first two years in office and attended the opening of the Learning Schools Trust's Ipswich academy in 2013.

But concerns over the Swedish model



Former education secretary Michael Gove was said to be a "huge admirer" of Swedish-style education

PA/IMAGES

local schools, Waldegrave and Teddington.

The remaining school, Elizabeth Woodville School, in Milton Keynes, which has been rated good, will form a multi-academy trust alongside Sponne School, an outstanding rated teaching school in Northamptonshire.

"We didn't want to end up as a standalone trust. We believe in multi-academy trusts," Bolingbroke added.

"It's the right structure for schools in the long term – the schools benefit from the support of working with other schools."

Kunskapsskolan was reported in 2008 as having plans to open 30 academies in England over ten years. But its winding-up marks the end of its sponsorship of UK schools.

Cecilia Carnefeldt, president and chief executive of Kunskapsskolan Education Sweden, said the trust had decided to transfer its schools so they could take the next step in "improving top line results".

"We believe they would benefit from being part of local partnership arrangements where a group of local schools work together to share best practice, economies of scale, joint systems and approaches.

"We have offered the schools the opportunity to remain part of the KED network, participating in any ongoing or future projects, as well as offering them the opportunity for any other collaboration."

The Department for Education said its academies model allowed the "best leaders to run schools based on the needs of their pupils. Trusts also decide when alternative governance arrangements would better serve the needs of their pupils, as is the case with the Learning Schools Trust."

have since surfaced, with a report from the OECD last year warning Sweden's school system was in "need of urgent change".

Steve Bolingbroke, chief executive of the trust, told *Schools Week* that the geographical split between its schools contributed to its demise.

"Our trust was set up in 2010, when the world was very different, and evidence now shows local groups of schools are better able to support each other."

The trust's four schools all employed KED – a personalised education programme used throughout Kunskapsskolan's schools.

However Ofsted said bright pupils at

Ipswich academy were not given hard enough work and students misbehaved in dull lessons

The school was rated inadequate in 2013 and again in 2015, before being handed to the Paradigm trust.

The trust's Hampton academy, in the London borough of Richmond, was rated as requires improvement last year.

The nearby Twickenham academy was rated inadequate last month, with inspectors describing low pupil progress, low teacher expectations and that too many pupils found lessons uninteresting.

The schools will now form a trust with two

... while Spanish firm dips its toes in the water

An academy trust founded by a Spanish firm which runs British international schools in countries including Panama is set to take over its second school in the UK.

The King's Group Academies (KGA) will take over Ringmer community college, in East Sussex, in September. Lyndhurst junior school in Portsmouth joined the trust earlier this year.

KGA was formed by the King's Group, a private firm based in Spain which runs British international schools, after it won Department for Education approval to sponsor UK schools last year.

The department's decision was based on the group's international schooling record, including its five schools in Spain, one in Panama and one in England, St Michael's College, in Worcestershire. Another school is due to open in Latvia next year.

The group said it was entering the UK state sector to "contribute to the wider community".

Richard Schofield, KGA chief executive, told *Schools Week* that the trust planned to teach no more than 5,000 pupils, split into three clusters of schools, all with an all-through ethos.

"We're not looking to takeover the world,

we want to keep it small and high quality."

He said the trust's pupils would have a "huge wealth of resources and opportunities" through links to its sponsor's schools with the end goal to create a "global learning village".

The phrase "global learning" features heavily in literature sent to parents.

But a parent from the Ringmer school, who contacted *Schools Week*, had concerns about the trust having a Spanish base, plus the locality and suitability of its board members, which include several former diplomats, to oversee UK schools.

Schofield said the trust was a separate organisation, and that King's had appointed a team, including headteachers of outstanding schools, former Her Majesty's Inspectors and national leaders of education, to run it.

Company accounts show five directors at the trust, three of them also board members of the King's Group.

They include Elena Benito, the King's chief executive who lives in Spain, and Michael Holloway, a former British ambassador to Panama, who now lives in England.

The third is Sir Roger Fry, a former teacher born in Portsmouth, who founded the King's Group after moving to Spain in the 1960s. He

still lives there.

The parent also queried the motivation behind the group's expansion into the UK state sector.

Critics often cite the prestige of opening schools in new countries as one of the main prompts for international school groups wanting to run UK schools.

But Schofield said this hasn't played a part in King's decision. "The group is such a strong brand abroad, it doesn't need the leverage from this country."

He said Fry was "risking his reputation" on the academies being a success, but what really excited him was bringing different communities together.

The group's vision, according to its website, is to "be at the forefront of British education internationally" and to "contribute to the wider community".

Schofield also said he saw opportunities for teachers in the venture: "We see a real advantage in the opportunity to retain staff

within a global context."

The firm teaches the national curriculum among its international schools and employs teachers trained in England.

He said many English-trained teachers taught abroad when they were younger, but later came back to the UK. "That's an awful lot of talented staff, it's an ideal opportunity to give them a complete recycling opportunity."

He also said the outcome of last night's EU referendum would have "no impact whatsoever" on the trust's global learning community.



Richard Schofield, KGA chief executive: "we're not looking to take over the world"

How the brightest are sl

SOPHIE SCOTT
@SOPH_E_SCOTT

Exclusive

The buzz phrase within education policy and schools over the past six years is to close the gap — between disadvantaged children and their better-off peers; between boys and girls; between white working-class boys and everyone else.

But what impact have policy decisions had on pupils at the top and bottom end of the attainment scale?

Figures put together for Schools Week by the education data analysis group School Dash highlight a worrying trend

Falling levels of achievement by high-attaining pupils appear to be exacerbated by caps on exam results, while the improvement of low-attaining pupils has remained stubbornly low, new data shows.

School Dash's analysis of GCSE results shows the gap between the highest and lowest attaining pupils has closed over the past four years by 4 percentage points.

However, the new figures suggest this has been driven exclusively by a drop in the performance of high attainers, where there has been a 4 percentage point fall since 2012.

Results for pupils classed by the government as "low attaining" have risen by just 0.1 percentage point.

Lee Elliot Major, chief executive of the Sutton Trust and founding trustee of the Education Endowment Foundation, said the figures were a "cause for concern".

"We need to ensure that all children reach their potential, both the high achievers and those who are low achieving."

Analysis of 2,800 secondary schools in England discovered that in 2015, the gap between the two groups — those with high and low attainment when starting their GCSEs — was at 81.4 percentage points.

A total of 89 per cent of pupils at the top achieved five A*-C GCSEs including English and maths (5A*C EM) in 2015, while just 7.6 per cent of low-attaining pupils reached that benchmark.

However, in 2012 92.9 per cent of high attainers got 5A*C EM.

Meanwhile, the proportion of low-attaining pupils getting 5A*C EM in the four-year period has increased by just 0.1 percentage point.

One explanation for the dip in the high-attaining pupils' results is the decision by exam regulator Ofqual to implement "comparable outcomes".

These, in effect, prevent a large increase in the number of top grades at GCSE. Or, as Michael Gove, former education secretary, described them: "Prevent the erosion of standards."

But, education consultant Ros McMullen, a former headteacher, says the decision has led to pupils "losing out" and believes this data backs sector concerns about the ability to show school improvement.

"If you have a system that is improving and everybody is doing better, then you will definitely see the pass rates go up, but [Ofqual is] working to keep pass rates the same.

"This is quite dangerous because it means you are working in a zero-sum game; you can't really see nationally whether schools have improvement or not. All you will see is a redistribution of those grades.

"There was probably some truth in the claim that if pass rates went up year-on-year it meant that standards were getting lower. However, if you work to keep pass rates the same then you are not allowing yourself to see where there has been genuine improvement."

Leaders and teaching unions have criticised comparable outcomes since their introduction in 2012 in an attempt to clamp down on grade inflation.

An Ofqual spokesperson said the approach means that if pupils taking a qualification are of similar ability to the previous year, then "we would expect the overall results for both cohorts to be similar".

"Comparable outcomes do not restrict the number of top grades being awarded to able students. Under our approach to monitoring, exam boards have the opportunity to put the case for an award being higher or, for that matter, lower than is predicted.

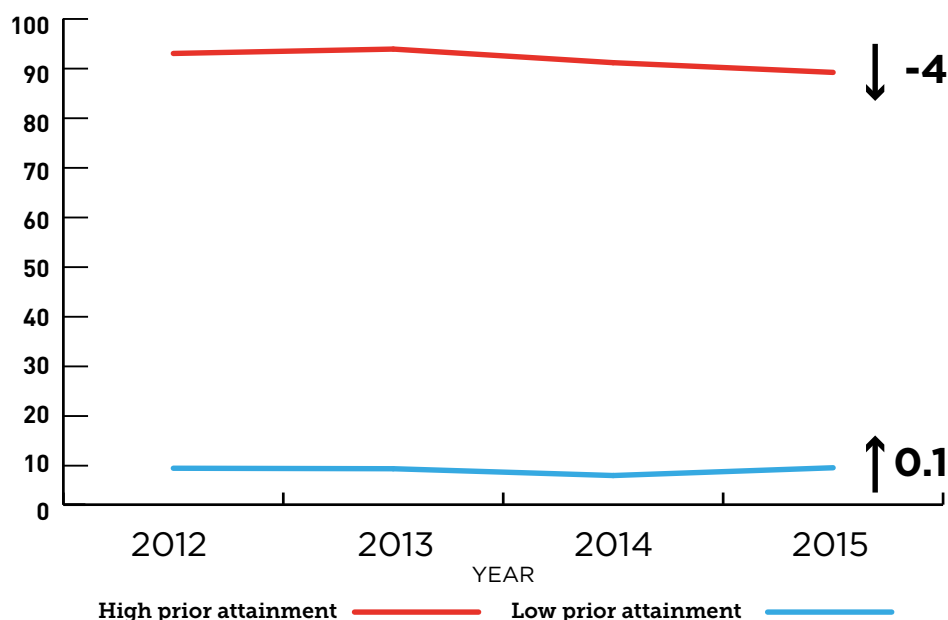
"The approach also avoids students in the first year of a new qualification being disadvantaged because they are the first to sit new qualifications."

Elliot Major said the data suggested too many children were still leaving school without basic numeracy and literacy. A clear focus was needed on pupils both at the top and bottom of attainment levels.

"All the evidence highlights two really stark challenges for the education system: ensuring we support and stretch the highest achievers irrespective of the background they come from, but also addressing the lowest attainers.

"If you look at any data, it is incredibly depressing that for all the effort and evidence-led reforms we have had in recent years, a stubborn number of children leave

Percentage of pupils achieving 5 A-C GCSEs, including maths and English



Percentage achieving 5 A-Cs, including maths and English, by region

Region	2012			2015			Gap over time
	Low	High	Gap	Low	High	Gap	
All	7.5	92.9	85.4	7.6	89	81.4	-4
North East	6.2	93.1	86.9	5.8	86.5	80.7	-6.2
North West	6.2	92.8	86.6	6.6	86.8	80.2	-6.4
Yorkshire and the Humber	6	93.8	87.8	6.9	88.2	81.3	-6.5
East Midlands	6.3	92.2	85.9	5.9	86.1	80.2	-5.7
West Midlands	7.3	94	86.7	6.8	88.4	81.6	-5.1
East of England	6	92.3	86.3	7.5	91.3	83.8	-2.5
South East	6.9	92.1	85.2	7.9	89.9	82	-3.2
South West	4.9	92	87.1	6.4	89.9	83.5	-3.6
London	14.8	93.7	78.9	12.2	91.2	79	0.1



Ros McMullen

school without basic numeracy and literacy."

But Dave Thompson, from Education Datalab, warned against drawing too many conclusions from the figures.

He said the attainment bands might not be comparable, particularly for the 2015 results, as some pupils were involved in the 2010 boycott of national primary tests and therefore may not have been assigned to the correct bands — which had quite large regional effects.

Thompson also said last year's cohort would not have been tested in science at the end of primary school and, as results in that subject were often higher than English and maths,

more may have ended up in the upper band of attainment before 2015.

"But even with the above, the percentage of pupils in the upper band increased from 33.5 per cent in 2012 to 35 per cent in 2015."

He said with a "static" awarding system, such as comparable outcomes, if pupils were performing better at key stage 2 this would not necessarily lead to an improvement in key stage 4 outcomes. Changes in performance tables also removed multiple entry GCSEs and a large number of vocational qualifications from the measures.

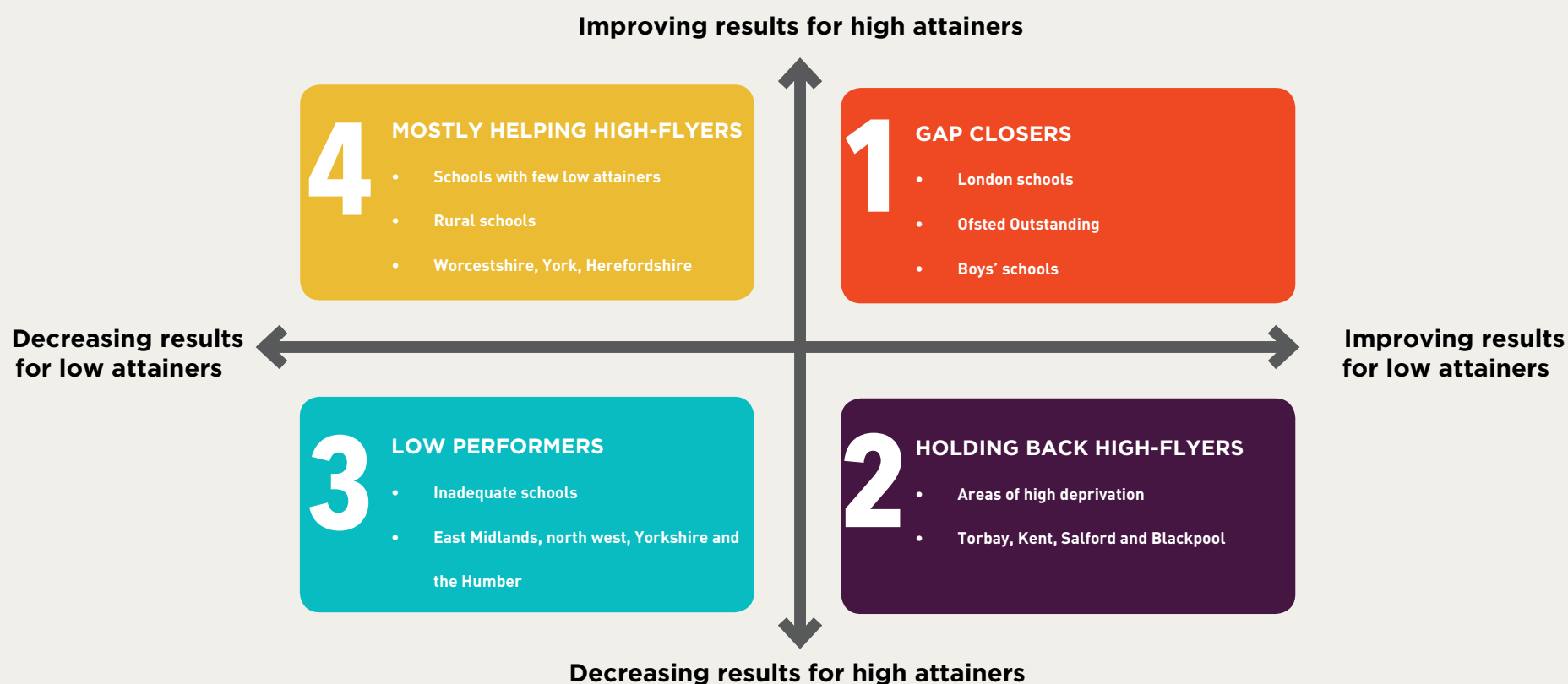
Since 2012, he said, these changes have meant the proportion of children achieving 5A*-Cs (or equivalent) in any subject has fallen from 85 per cent



Tim Brighouse

Flipping down the tables

Who is closing the gap between high and low prior attainers?



The data identifies four different groups of schools, with specific traits, across England that achieve different outcomes for their low and high attaining pupils.

These are:

1. Gap closers

Schools doing the most to close the gap between high and low attainers. They are often found in London, are rated Ofsted outstanding, or are boys' schools.

2. Holding back high-flyers

Those that, controversially, decrease the gap by reducing outcomes for high-attainers. A pattern that tends to be found in areas with high levels of deprivation,

with Torbay, Kent, Salford and Blackpool performing poorly on this measure.

3. Low performers

These schools have poor headline measures with results low for high and low-attainers. Ones with the worst gaps are most likely to be inadequate schools and those in the East Midlands, north west, Yorkshire and the Humber

4. Only helping high-flyers

Meanwhile, these are schools look like they are performing well overall, but tend to increase the gap as they are doing well for high attainers, but not for low prior attainers. Typically, they have small proportions of low-attainers, are rural

schools, and based in Worcestershire, York, Herefordshire and the east of England.

In January, *Schools Week* attempted to find examples of schools where low-attaining pupils were achieving on a par with their peers, based on last summer's GCSE results.

There were stringent conditions to be included in this "league table": high proportions of low-attaining pupils, high levels of pupils in receipt of free school meals, above average proportions of low-attaining pupils getting five A*-Cs including English and maths, and the school meeting the government benchmark (40 per cent 5A*C EM) overall.

Of 3,264 state-funded secondaries, just 10 made the grade.

These are extreme examples, but prove there are schools that are able to buck the trend, even with numerous challenges.

As Elliot Major points out: "You must hold optimism that there are schools in the country that do manage to close gaps and fulfil the potential of all children, irrespective of achievement.

"The challenge is always about how you scale up and do that for the whole system."

He said the only way was through evidence-based policies to improve schools, and by making improvements outside the school gates, such as by raising parental aspirations. But it could only work if both of these community-focused and government-led policy changes worked in tandem.

to 68 per cent last year.

However, Sir Tim Brighouse, former London Schools Commissioner and leader of the London Challenge, backed the view that regulation of grades was having an impact.

"We are bedevilled by a system that is always normatively referencing everything, which doesn't serve anyone very well. How do we know if the standards are rising or falling?"

He said the best way to assess standards at GCSE was to have randomised tests, taken by a sample of pupils every year, rather than everyone taking GCSEs.



Timo Hannay

Brighouse said he wouldn't want schools to be held accountable for the results but the system would allow "real standards" to be tracked "rather than standards that are understandably affected by the fierce accountability regime on schools".

In March, Ofqual ran a full-scale trial of the national reference tests for year 11s.

In future about 9,000 pupils will take the tests. The results will

be used to decide the proportion of pupils across England able to achieve certain grades in their GCSEs.

Timo Hannay, School Dash founder, said: "If education is genuinely going to provide

opportunity for all then we should pay almost as much attention to the gap between the most able and least able students as we do to absolute levels of attainment.

"This analysis shows that some schools do well on both fronts. Understanding exactly how and why could help others to replicate their success."

Brighouse added: "We should not be limiting the achievement of those at the top but raising the standards of those at the lower end to a level that increases their resilience and self-confidence so they can discover their talent, whatever that talent might be, and take it to its fullest extent.

"Don't close the gap; mind the gap."

ONLINE DETAILS

For more detailed and interactive figures, see SCHOOLDASH.COM/BLOG.HTML#20160624

NEWS

IN brief

TEACHING ASSISTANTS EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE

More than half of teaching assistants have experienced physical violence at school in the past year, with new figures also revealing one in five schools did not have an adequate behaviour management policy.

A survey of nearly 15,000 support staff, including teaching assistants, cleaners and catering staff, published by public service union Unison this week, found almost one in five had experienced violence at school.

Of the teaching assistants surveyed, 53 per cent said they had experienced physical violence. Another three-quarters of those (76 per cent) said they had witnessed violence at their school in the past 12 months.

However the report, *Bad Form: Behaviour in Schools*, also found nearly one in five (19 per cent) of respondents said their school did not have an adequate behaviour management policy.

Jon Richards, Unison's head of education, said a lack of resources due to budget pressures meant schools were unable to address behavioural issues.

DFE SEEKS REPLACEMENT FOR MARSHALL

The Department for Education (DfE) is seeking a new £800-a-day lead non-executive director after chair Sir Paul Marshall announced he is to stand down.

The government said Marshall's successor will need experience of senior leadership in a "large and complex" organisation and an understanding of how government works.

The role pays £20,000 for 24 days' work a year. Marshall, who chairs academy chain Ark and think tank the Education Policy Institute, was recently knighted for services to education and philanthropy.

The hedge fund manager and high-profile Liberal Democrat donor has served on the department's board for more than three years.

The successful candidate will advise on and monitor delivery of the department's strategic priorities.

An advert for the role says applicants will have experience of risk, performance and financial management, and that anyone with experience in children's services would be "particularly welcome". Applications close on Monday, July 4.

TEACHING LEADERS AND FUTURE LEADERS MERGE

Two education charities that provide training courses to develop future school leaders have announced they will merge.

Teaching Leaders and The Future Leaders Trust (TFLT) will join forces with the aim of operating as one organisation – yet to be named – in six months' time.

The two charities have more than 18 years' experience of developing aspiring leaders and between them have trained more than 3,500 school leaders.

James Toop, chief executive of Teaching Leaders, will take up the same role at the new organisation.

He said the merger would enable the charities to reach more leaders.

TFLT has been without a permanent chief executive after Heath Monk stepped down in February, following eight years at the helm.

Baroness Sally Morgan, chair of trustees at TFLT and a trustee at Teaching Leaders, will become the chair designate for the first year of the new organisation.

Resignations leave AET board 'struggling'

ANN MCGAURAN

@ANNMCGAURAN

Exclusive

The boss of the country's largest multi-academy trust has admitted it will struggle to run key committees after the chair stood down and six trustees quit.

Jude Chin, chair of Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), remains as a trustee following the resignations late last month of vice-chair Ian Foster and five other trustees of the 67-school chain.

Ian Comfort, the group's chief executive, admits four trustees in place will make it "very difficult" for the trust to continue its audit and risk and remuneration committees.

In a report to the board, Comfort suggested it could delegate responsibility for these areas to an individual trustee until new appointments were made.

AET said that it commissioned an independent review of governance as a number of trustees were "approaching the end of their term of office" and such a review was a "mark of good business practice".

The review recommended setting up a nominations committee for governance. The trustees agreed to leave at the same time so the board structure could be "refreshed".

Two new trustees – Andrew Thraves and Jack Boyer – were approved on May 24. Both have strong links with companies

providing services to schools and, with Comfort and Chin, are now the only four trustees at the helm.

In October 2014, the Education Funding Agency issued the trust with a written notice to improve its financial management, control and governance. The notice is still in place.

In February this year, Ofsted published a focused inspection on some of AET's academies. It said too many pupils were being failed, with children from poor backgrounds doing particularly badly.

It also highlighted "turbulence in recent months" within the board of trustees, as well as insufficient detail on the trust's website about the way it was governed.

The report said the distinction between roles and responsibilities of the board members and trustees was not set out clearly and the trust did not identify which functions were delegated to local governing boards.

According to AET, the nominations committee is now seeking further trustees "to establish a diverse board with complementary skills and expertise".

AET said Chin – who is chair of the schools network SSAT – had been appointed in October last year as interim chair. But when his appointment was announced, press releases did not reference the interim nature of the role.

Ian Foster resigned, with Trevor Fulcher, Jerry Glazier, Stuart Green, Keith Lomax



Jude Chin

and Fr Adam Gaunt, with effect from May 24.

New trustee Jack Boyer is an entrepreneur who chairs engineering firm Ilika plc. He is non-executive director of global technology company Laird plc and strategic outsourcing company Mitie Group plc. Ruby McGregor-Smith, the chief executive of Mitie, whose company's services include schools facilities management, is a non-executive director of the Department for Education.

Andrew Thraves is currently director of education for Prospects Group, which provides a wide range of education, employment and skills services to schools, colleges and councils in the UK and internationally.

£2m more earmarked for military-style projects

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

A third of a £6 million funding pot aimed at building character in school pupils will be targeted at military-style projects, prompting criticism from campaigners.

The government has said that up to £2 million of its character education grant funding will this year pay for projects that have a "military ethos approach to develop character".

According to the Forces Watch campaign group, the latest announcement takes the total amount spent or earmarked by the government for projects aimed at instilling a military ethos in schools since 2012 to almost £90 million.

Applications for this year have just closed, with schools having to wait until September to find out if they have been successful in their bids for between £50,000 and £750,000. The fund is separate to the department's annual character education awards.

Forces Watch, which scrutinises army recruitment practices, said the grant allocation was the latest in a series of big pay-outs related to military-style education, citing the £10 million Troops to Teachers recruitment scheme and £14 million already spent on the cadet expansion scheme, which received another £50 million last year.

Emma Sangster, co-ordinator of the organisation, questioned the logic of the



Department for Education's approach when last year's character awards had demonstrated a "wealth of other approaches".

"Is this policy primarily about building character or is it about influencing young people about the benefits of the armed forces?"

"The increasing inclusion of military approaches in our education system has received almost no public scrutiny. There needs to be a full review of why this is happening and who benefits and what the concerns may be before any more money is spent on it."

On top of the grants issued each year, schools can win up to £35,000 in the department's character education awards. Last year, 21 schools and six charities each won £15,000, with King's Leadership academy in Warrington scooping an additional £20,000.

The school, which encourages its pupils

to join the cadets, was praised for its "King's passport" programme, where character is logged for every pupil and a "seven pillars" policy is in place.

Oakthorpe, a community primary school in Swadlincote, Derbyshire, was praised for a positive behaviour rewards system developed by its school council to help children to reach their "ideal selves".


Schools Week recently reported government claims that it is "on track" to create 500 cadet units in schools by 2020, despite refusing to release details on the numbers created with the £50 million allocated in last year's summer budget.

Kevin Courtney, acting general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said there were "many ways to improve children and young people's confidence and character."

"A 'military ethos' approach is one greatly favoured by government but it is neither the only way nor the most desirable way to engage with students."

A department spokesperson said the £2 million would fund projects that instilled confidence, leadership, resilience and team-work.

"Previous military ethos programmes have had a positive impact on those who have taken part – it's right that we extend this opportunity to the most disadvantaged pupils so they can achieve the same outcomes as their peers."

A woman with long, wavy blonde hair, wearing a blue short-sleeved top with ruffled shoulders, stands against a background of radiating orange and yellow lines. She is holding a stack of maps and pointing at one of them with her right hand.

Shelley Monk,
Subject Specialist,
Geography, OCR

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

@miss_mcinerney | laura.mcinerney@schoolsweek.co.uk

We can't ignore the high-fliers who are not being pushed

The last few weeks of EU referendum debate have shown how badly we do latent anger as a country. Whatever ideals one may hold, whatever the reality may be, swathes of the population nevertheless feel as if politicians have long ignored them and want to exert more power over their lives.

By the time you will be reading this, the voting will be over. One uncertainty will be gone. But others will surface now that people are no longer content to stay quiet about things that have angered them. Grammar schools, I fear, will be one of the new battlegrounds.

It was therefore enormously inconvenient when senior reporter Sophie Scott showed me the results of our investigation, completed with data company School Dash, on the declining achievement gap between children with different levels of prior attainment.

The chasm between pupils who excel early in school compared with those lagging behind looks to be reducing. Unfortunately, this appears to be due to some schools presiding over a decline in their brightest pupils' achievements rather than because laggards are boosted.

Reading the piece, I clung to the fact that some researchers quibbled with the finding. It's probably a quirk in the data, they said. Sure, I thought, must be that. Before realising I had fallen prey to the trick of finding the one bit of an article I agreed with and deciding it was definitely the only correct part. Sigh.

If just one piece of data was suggesting a problem for high-fliers I could dismiss it as a quirk. But both chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw and Tony Sewell – the profile interview this week on page 12 – are also saying the same. In their view, kids with early potential simply aren't being pushed.

Logically, I don't believe it. Most teachers love smart kids and go out of their way to help them.

But, a bit like burying our heads in the sand over immigration, if we don't recognise that concerns about this issue are growing we could find politicians taking advantage of quiet resentments.

If Boris Johnson becomes the next prime minister – and he's currently the bookies' favourite – there's reason to believe he will attempt to reintroduce grammar schools. Even if he's not PM, the influence of Conservative backbenchers is likely to get louder. And many are also grammar fans.

If that happens, any evidence hinting that high-attaining pupils are facing disadvantage will be used to stoke agreement for grammars. Doesn't matter if I disagree with it personally. Doesn't matter if other data researchers do. Once the narrative begins, and it taps into people's deepest beliefs, the reality will be ignored.

So, what should be done to ensure high-attaining pupils achieve their potential?

Streaming by ability is the easy go-to. The Labour government did this in the early 2000s, with Ruth Kelly using her time as education secretary to call for the return of top sets. Nicky Morgan also said the same early in her tenure. Then quietly never mentioned it again.

A second (better) hope is that changes to accountability measures will mean teachers spread their focus across all pupils.

See more on page 12



But teachers are constantly told to target certain groups – most recently, the whitest, the poorest, the least able, those with special needs and those with mental health issues. Up against those, the most able are likely to come some way down the priority list.

But perhaps we are all missing a trick.

It might be healthier if the government laid off schools and instead looked to extra-curricular organisations such as Sewell's Generation Genius. It's almost a cliché in our office that once a quarter we receive a Sutton Trust report saying that young people should have vouchers with which they can access extra-curricular activities – but it's not a daft idea.

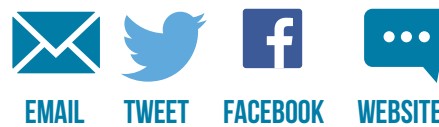
Schools have limited hours and resources, and must batch-educate children in classes. Extra-curricular

organisations can be targeted, smaller, linked to pupils' individual needs. They can help the high-fliers keep flying, and help the stragglers catch up, because they can be more attentive to needs.

Imagine if every child, high or low attaining, attended weekly small group activities in which an adult cared about them, gave them powerful knowledge for their future, and helped them to become great at something they loved. Yes, we'd still be living in a world where GCSE scores differed but at least it would be a world in which each and every pupil was being pushed to achieve more.

And it wouldn't just be down to schools. It would be a community effort. That's a world I would vote for, whatever the results of this referendum.

READERS' REPLY



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU
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Amanda Spielman named as new Ofsted chief inspector

Colin Richards, Cumbria

Dear editor,
In a recent statement Sir Michael Wilshaw was right to assert that "Ofsted should not become the plaything of government". But nor should it become the plaything of chief inspectors such as Sir Chris Woodhead or Michael Wilshaw himself who have too often selectively used inspection findings to promote their personal agendas. As an "academy devotee", Amanda Spielman needs to be acutely beware of the temptation to do the same. That's not the role the education system needs of a chief inspector. Nor should she be tempted to focus on administrative efficacy and regulatory stringency as a grand-style educational accountant. She should use her office to "speak the truth to power"; this will be more important than ever given the far-reaching changes being made to the educational landscape.

Philanthro-philes: meet the donors propping up our education system

Ian Taylor, Bristol

Wealthy men with more money than they knew what to do with used to buy super-yachts. Some bought premier league football clubs. Are they now buying our children's minds?

Janet Downs, Lincolnshire

Philanthrocapitalism isn't always as altruistic as it may seem. It can benefit donors directly (by encouraging the purchase of goods and services provided by the donor or associates) or indirectly (by raising prestige that can in turn lead to the giving of awards). And there's the thorny question of tax avoidance.

Of course, some children may benefit. But such largesse affects only a few. Mr Brownlow may have rescued Oliver Twist but his actions did nothing to help the rest of Fagin's gang.

The danger is the government will expect other schools to become self-sustaining. The few that do will be held up as examples to encourage the others and used as an excuse to reduce government investment in education.

A better, and fairer, system would be one where all schools are funded properly. Education is a public, as well as a private, good.

John Smith, address supplied

You help to starve public services of proper funding by choosing to pay taxes more "efficiently", by choosing not to

campaign for fairer taxation etc, and then you ride in on your charity horse to save the day on your own terms. What role models these people are.

Pupils forced to switch school after free transport cut

Steve Wren, Leeds

A key issue here is that the local authority (LA) advised parents (when their children were in year 6) that their nearest school for admissions was Boston Spa and therefore parents selected that school.

The authority has now turned around and said it will only fund transport to the nearest school which is Wetherby – so everyone at Boston Spa has to pay.

Parents have come back with "hang on, you said our nearest school was Boston Spa" but the LA has said it uses a different method for calculating the nearest school for free transport purposes (crow flies vs shortest road route).

Parents asked how they were meant to know this – and how could they check. The LA advised they use a commercial mapping product that is not publicly available, that is, there is no way at all that parents could possibly know!

If I were Ofsted chief inspector...

Jill Greenwood, Hertfordshire

This all makes so much sense! The use of the term "outstanding" in education is bordering on the ridiculous, if the school is outstanding every day, it cannot be outstanding; it would become the norm, surely? Also, the pressure that the school is under to maintain the description must be huge. I have visited outstanding schools during training and found them to be far inferior in many categories to my own "good" school in terms of what really matters: love and care for and of the children.

Naive? Probably but as a mother of six very different children ranging from A* potential to getting a grade potential, I know what I want. Similarly, as a teacher of some experience of "low ability" students, I know that the results agenda is another world.

Finally, I can name MANY students leaving my school without attaining target grades, who are now hard-working, high-fliers who could buy and sell any one of us.

If I were Ofsted chief inspector...

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Jonathan Jones, Nottinghamshire

Great article.

It is certainly time to get rid of the ludicrous "outstanding" label. Many "good" schools are surely better than the school around the corner that was judged "outstanding" nine years or so ago.

Another problem is that it must make headteacher and other school leader recruitment to these schools difficult.

Why would an ambitious, high-flying, capable school leader want to take the helm of a so-called "outstanding" school? Much better and more professionally satisfying to take on a RI school and improve it.

REPLY OF THE WEEK
RECEIVES A SCHOOLS
WEEK MUG!



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

However big or small, if you have information or a story you think our readers would be interested in, then please get in touch. For press releases make sure you email our news email account, and don't be afraid to give us a call.

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THE INTERVIEW

TONY SEWELL

LAURA MCINERNEY

@MISS_MCINERNEY

Tony Sewell, chief executive Generating Genius

It's a brave man who takes on Owen Jones in front of a young audience. Jones, author of *Chavs* and darling of left-wing socialists, is beloved among angsty teenagers who see him as one of the few people on telly talking about politics in plain language and sticking up for the rights of the young.

Tony Sewell, however, is unamused – and in a talk at the Festival of Education due to take place today, he plans to explain why. The speech, *Loud, Proud and Happy to be Victims*, accuses Jones of pulling the ladder up for children of the future by reinforcing victimhood and “making out that universities are full of posh snobs who despise the working class”.

“There is some romanticism about being working class and I want to break that,” Sewell says, as he dashes from Victoria station in central London to a meeting related to his charity Generating Genius.

“Ain't nothing romantic about being working class. Most working-class people, who are genuinely working class, want to come out of it. That's the definition of it. You don't want to stay in it.”

Being working class isn't about culture, he says, it's about poverty. Jones often talks about the culture of working class (particularly northern) people – their hobbies, or their accent – and there's a suggestion that going to university requires these to diminish.

Sewell is excoriating on this point: “The left to a certain extent have misunderstood that. They think that somehow we will do something to working-class kids if we expose them to Shakespeare or Latin or whatever. There's an idea of ‘that's not for you, that's for an elite type of person.’”

He also blames working-class culture for becoming “too obsessed with consumerism” claiming that “bedrooms are packed with cheap TVs and expensive phones, with not a book in sight”.

But the 300 pupils that Sewell works with at any one time through Generating Genius show it's possible for young people from poorer backgrounds to bridge different cultural worlds. “They can be at home on the streets of Brixton or Croydon and yet still go into Devon or Cornwall and be at home there – they are now able to adapt.”

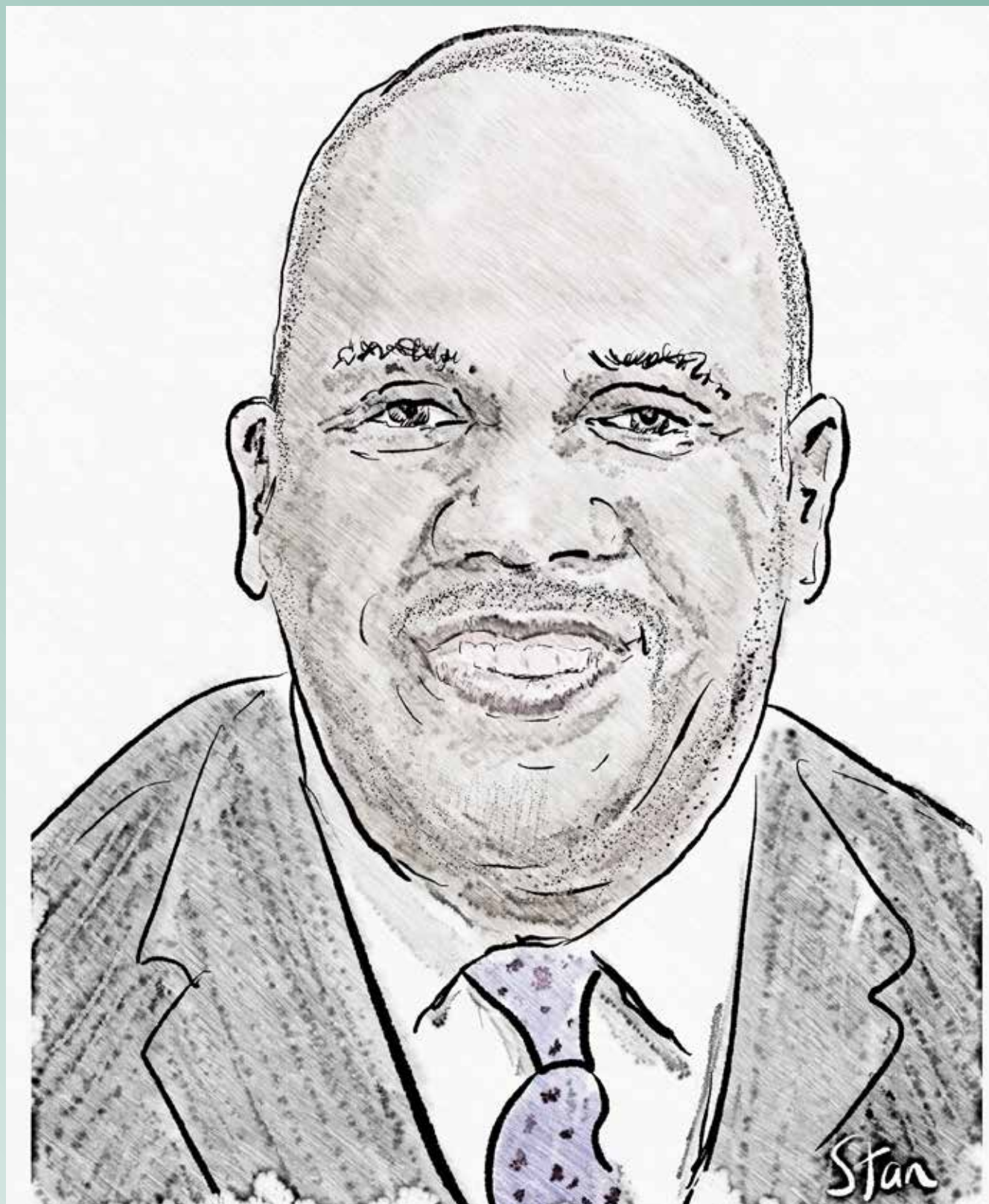
Awarded a CBE in the recent Queen's Honours, the achievement caps Sewell's career which began as a classroom teacher in London, through to becoming a teacher trainer, complete a PhD, and chair the London mayor's 2013 inquiry into schools.

Most recently he helped to found the Michaela free school in north London, a strict “no excuses” school, and Generating Genius has continued to give out-of-school experiences to Afro-Caribbean boys from families and schools without a history of university attendance.

Sewell is pleased by his honour but wants to use it to highlight Generating Genius in particular.

“It started in 2007, coming out of what we saw then. There was an issue where children who were very bright, but we didn't help because we put a lot of emphasis on underachievement.”

Wanting to demonstrate that while barriers for poor black children to attend university were real, they were nevertheless surmountable, the organisation decided to target the group with the lowest achievement (Afro-Caribbean boys), teaching them the hardest subjects (science and maths) and targeting the most aspirational



outcome (attending top universities).

“We realised that this thing couldn't be done by a one-off programme. We knew we would have to commit to a cycle for four or five years,” he says.

The first boys to enter the programme were 13 and were given a series of extra-curricular activities, as well as support and mentoring. They are now 21. Most went through universities and at a returners' event last week Sewell learned they are now working for companies such as Shell, BP and investment banks.

Instead of focusing on their disadvantages, pupils were given experiences to develop their knowledge – visiting university campuses in rural areas with predominantly white populations, or studying with a world-renowned team of scientists developing a cure for malaria at Imperial College London.

“People ask if we did black studies with these pupils.

No! We didn't do any of that. We just did really really difficult science.”

Sewell himself benefited from an “accidental classical education” after his mother discovered a retired neighbour had once been a Latin teacher, and sent him for lessons.

“Also I went to an all-white Anglican church. That gave me role models, which is ironic, but role models don't have to be from the same background as you. It was natural that all those kids from that Anglican white middle-class church were all going off to university. All my peers went so I just did the same thing. You follow me? It's all about exposure. It's about reinforcing.”

So does he think about middle-class white kids learning from the young people that he works with? Does it go both ways?

“Yes and no,” he says, then trails off and starts laughing. “Actually... no.”

“We didn’t do black studies. We just did really difficult science”

He tells the story of a young person from Hackney who, on his arrival at the University of Bristol, is greeted with presuppositions of his life around gangs when fellow students learn of his origins. But the boy overcame the prejudice because of his experiences on the programme.

“What our kids are able to do is that they are so confident, they are so exposed to the world – the same world as their middle-class counterparts – that this kind of conversation and fear drifts away. Even if people think it, it takes seconds to change it.”

And so, Sewell says excitedly, in just a short while the boy was accepted by his peers. “This is unashamedly a Pygmalion exercise where I have made them middle class!”

I can’t say for sure given that we are on the phone, but it sounds like he’s smiling.

The exam results statistics of poor black Caribbean pupils may now be marginally better than their white counterparts, but they still make grim reading, and the permanent exclusion rate for the group remains stubbornly high.

Girls are also now the largest cohort in the group, with the focus on science and maths particularly important, as girls are so under-represented among those degree subjects.

What Sewell would like to do next is expand the charity beyond London. In 2007, the capital was still struggling with violence and low standards. Today, its schools are the best in the country and achievement across all pupil groups outstrips every other region.

Pragmatically, Sewell knows there isn’t much government cash around for such projects “and I’m not necessarily asking for any” – but he, like many small education organisation founders, believes its success is down to the personal relationships with young people that are only possible because participant numbers are low. Scaling the organisation risks upsetting that balance.

What he would therefore like to see is the government considering how small voluntary organisations such as his could create other small projects in parts of the country most in need of support for bright children.

He’s also pleased to have a new ally. “It’s good that Michael Wilshaw [the chief inspector] has now made the case for doing more to help brighter children who have the intellectual capacity to succeed but are from poorer backgrounds.

“We should all do more,” he agrees, before cheekily adding, “we just got there first!”

ODDS STACKED AGAINST DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

Last year, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission reported that low-ability wealthy children are overtaking their high-ability, poorer peers during school. And only 2.2 per cent of young people from areas where few progress to higher education reach the most selective third of universities compared with 18.1 per cent of those from high participation areas, making them eight times less likely to do so.

Similarly, only 3 per cent of disadvantaged 18-year-olds enter “high tariff” universities (such as the Russell group) compared with 21 per cent of those from the most advantaged backgrounds

CV

Born: August 1959

Schools:

St John’s school, Penge, south London
Kentwood boys’ school, Penge

University:

University of Essex, BA (hons) English
University of Nottingham, PhD

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OPINION: EXAM SEASON SPECIAL



TIM OATES

Group director of assessment research and development, Cambridge Assessment

Just like Goldilocks, exam questions should be 'just right'

Exam question changes in the past two decades have often been made for clarity and "accessibility", says Tim Oates. But A-level questions from decades ago now available on the web, are proving that there is still a huge appetite for demanding physics

Social media allows global circulation of all sorts of conversations that previously would simply have been between two young people outside the exam hall – including the immediate complaint, "the questions were too hard". Indeed, at Cambridge we did some evaluation work on a set of qualifications and were struck by the students' responses: "...We know that the difficulty of the questions are taken into account and an A* last year is the same as an A* this year, but we don't like papers where we know that we are not getting all the questions completely right..." Interesting stuff about contemporary views of exams. Obviously, a GCSE paper in which few of the candidates get any of the questions right is a badly designed one. If everyone is bunched at the top, there is a problem of poor measurement.

James Stigler once deliberately set an impossible maths question as part of a research programme. It showed interesting differences between a nation in which maths ability is emphasised over effort, in contrast to those in which effort is emphasised over ability. In the "ability" nation, pupils quickly abandoned attempting the question. In the "effort" nations, pupils had to be told to stop after weeks of trying. No surprises which has higher overall maths attainment and better equity in outcomes. So what questions should we have in exams, and what questions should we use to maximise learning?

All of this hints at a kind of "Goldilocks" requirement: they shouldn't be too easy or too hard, they should be "just right". There is some evidence from the past two decades that subtle changes have been introduced in exam questions, often in the name of clarity and "accessibility". These have reduced the demand of questions and papers in some key subjects, with history and physics often mentioned. This can be subtle: breaking something down into small parts, adding a diagram here, a label there. Do it for one year's paper, and it may be a small and insignificant change. Do it for ten successive years and you might get a substantial shift. Surely all students would

welcome this relaxation? However, while a less demanding exam may be welcomed in a hot exam room in May, a quiet project has been effecting a revolution in how we can look at things.

Pupils in the 1980s knew a lot of physics

Mark Warner and Lisa Jardine-Wright, from the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, have put together a team of physicists who have been going through the archives at Cambridge Assessment, examining thousands of exam questions in physics going back to the late 19th century. They have found that over the past four decades questions have been in sub-parts, reducing the requirement for candidates to break down complex problems into manageable parts. Diagrams have removed the need for them to imagine, and then represent physical systems. Small changes; but over decades, they have added up. And it is no accident that physics degrees have had to change, many moving to four-year degrees, with some considering five years.

The first response of many people is to say "...but in the 80s, not many people were taking physics A-level, so they were all of high ability." Not at all – in 1982, more than 55,000 pupils sat physics A-level; last year, about 30,000. "Ah. But in 1980s, with those 'harder' questions, people did not have to get such a high mark to get an A..." But I have looked at the examiner reports of the time and these pupils had to get a high mark to get a high grade. They knew a lot of physics.

So this could be a "bad news" story; a decline in demanding exams. Except something very interesting has happened. The researchers have made the best historical questions available on the Isaac Physics website, in a form that keeps these demanding questions intact, and supports pupils in answering them, through prompts and hints. Excellent for learning as well as checking progress. And this is in huge demand – 10,000 hits a day at peak. Contrary to many perceptions and assumptions about the zeitgeist, there is huge appetite out there for demanding physics, a very "good news" story.

isaacphysics.org and isaacbooks.org



DEBRA KIDD

Teacher and teacher trainer

Multiple-choice? It makes sense to test what is testable

Marking can never be 100 per cent reliable. So perhaps it is time, says one-time examiner Debra Kidd, to remove open-ended tasks from the exam system altogether

I was once an examiner. It was a mind numbing, cheerless experience that was paid at a pittance, but I did it, year on year, because it gave me an insight that helped me to prepare my students for their own exams. I'd start off full of enthusiasm. Within a couple of days, I'd find myself cheering out loud when I opened an empty paper or one with a couple of sentences. No empathy – just relief that I had earned £2.35 for a few minutes' work (you've still got admin to do on it, even if it's blank). I'd mark papers fresh after breakfast and a shower. And I'd mark papers after my eyes felt like sandpaper and I was yawning so much that I almost swallowed my red pen. Can I honestly say that I marked every paper to the same standard? No. I made sure my sample went in right – checked and double checked. Then I hoped for the best on the rest. I wasn't negligent. Just human.

As long ago as 1996, Wiley et al showed that marking, even from the same examiner, was unreliable. And this was at a point when there were fewer exams and all examiners were expected to have had at least three years' teaching experience. The system is so overloaded now that boards last year were recruiting undergraduates and bombarding trainee teachers with requests to examine. It's no wonder that requests for re-marks have rocketed, as has the number of successful appeals. The system is straining.

This is a difficult enough problem to solve, but even if money were invested to ensure that every examiner was experienced and thoroughly checked, there are still problems with trying to apply criteria to open tasks written under pressure. We really need to consider what exams can tell us about the performance and progress of our children. And to this end, I am moving towards the belief that we would be better off removing open-ended tasks from the examination system altogether.

There is now significant evidence that it is possible to design multiple-choice tests that reliably tell us whether or not a student understands key concepts/information and is able to apply them. Dylan Wiliam's

hinge questions show that these can be quite sophisticated and Daisy Christodoulou has written widely on how it is possible for multiple-choice to expose misconceptions and show secure levels of knowledge. If we accept that examining open tasks is unreliable and that we have a significant and damaging shortage of people who are willing or even capable of examining, then it makes sense to test what is testable. Hell, even a computer could mark it. BUT...

We must not confuse testing with assessment

The sum of an education system should not be limited to what can reliably be tested. We need to take care not to confuse testing with assessment. No child should leave school defined by test scores. They should leave feeling that they have been assessed for a whole range of capabilities. Their test scores may show a level of competency in a set of measurable concepts and knowledge; they will not show imagination, the capacity to argue, assimilate, precis, connect and create. They will not show empathy, compassion, reasoning. They will not allow a student to make a momentous, informed decision such as how and why to vote in a referendum. I don't believe that any of those skills are possible to properly assess in an examined situation and attempting to do so has led us down a blind alley that is failing young people.

We need to combine that which is testable with portfolio, project-based assessment. And to do this, we need to start trusting and training teachers to assess pupils' work. While I accept that there is some evidence of bias in teacher assessments, there is no evidence that they are less reliable than the vagaries of examining, particularly in the arts and humanities. Indeed as a year 7 teacher I found assessments for writing from year 6 colleagues to be far more reliable than SATs scores. With careful moderation and training, it is perfectly possible to have the best of both worlds. And in the process we can create a fairer and far more exciting and relevant educational experience for young people.

Recent changes to the official guidelines on access arrangements and assistive technology have wide-reaching implications for all pupils if implemented equitably, argues Andrew Harland

Access arrangements (AA) help pupils with special educational needs, learning difficulties, disabilities or temporary injuries, to access the exam system.

They are often seen as the preserve of pupils with special needs and are considered a "bolt-on" to the exams system. However, this is an outmoded approach. The legislation was updated in 2010, but the process of communication and application throughout the school system has been painfully slow.

The latest guidelines from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) may help. The key idea is that that AA should be given only to those students who comply with a practice referred to as "the normal way of working".

This new approach states that AA should be led by teaching and learning outcomes and (shock, horror!) not just by exam system protocols. Practice may be lagging behind the legislation, but the vision is this: The "normal way of working" should be firmly established and practised year-round by staff and students under classroom conditions, which can then be easily replicated and transferred to the exam hall.

AA are too often seen as a tool to get through exams, with a spike in applications in exam season every year. And according to Ofqual's latest annual report, AA requests



ANDREW HARLAND

Chief executive, Examination Officers' Association

Access arrangements – are they a right or a privilege?

went up 10 per cent on the previous year in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (although the true figure, including internal awarding by centres, is likely to be higher).

Under the new guidelines, "need" should be identified long before students get anywhere near an exam hall. It is supposed to be based on their long-term "normal way of working" in classrooms, with a clear trail of evidence based on supportive tests and documentation provided by specialists. (JCQ inspectors can request to see these during inspections.)

The new system is also designed to quell accusations that individuals or centres are using AA as a short-term fix to "get around the system", because the approach will be embedded in the classroom, year-round. AA will match targeted needs in centres, which can then be planned, funded and resourced appropriately in future.

AA should no longer be seen as a thing of

privilege, but clearly defined and operated equitably across all exam centres. Nor should they be associated only with the SEND community, which has been too easily pigeonholed and conveniently labelled in the past. AA need to be embedded within teaching and learning practice, giving equal status to the benefit that they offer many highly talented students who have been excluded from participation in the exam system until now.

This all raises some interesting questions about assistive technology which has traditionally been defined too narrowly and tied to the exams process. But assistive technology does not apply only to people with disabilities. For many students, their "normal way of working" includes the use of many types of technology that are readily available at home, in schools and colleges, universities and in the workplace.

Assistive technology should be more effectively embedded in teaching and learning environments, as part of the basic skill base offered to future generations (although claiming that all students have a "right of access" to assistive technology, does not, of course, mean the funds will be available to make it happen in the near future).

They are too often seen as a tool to get through exams

The increasing prevalence of technology in schools will raise further challenges, not only for the JCQ in designing AA provisions that reflect pupils' "normal way of working", but also for exam boards in designing exams that reflect normal learning environments.

And of course, this emphasis on securing an AA regime that is defined by evidence and based upon the "normal way of working", will put even more pressure on teachers. Therefore, it is vital that staff are supported effectively through a shared understanding and application of AA, driven by clearer external JCQ guidance and internally, through the expertise of special needs coordinators and the exams office community.

examofficers.org.uk

We've heard some local authorities are looking at setting up a multi-academy trust – could this be a potential model for the good local authorities?

Antony says: The government has made its policy position on the role of local authorities in education very clear in the white paper. It sees local authorities taking on a "more focused and clearly-defined remit so they can concentrate on delivering their core functions" of school-place planning, ensuring the needs of vulnerable pupils are met and "acting as champions for all parents and families". So, it's clear that the government does not really see a future role for local authorities in having direct responsibility for running schools. In fact, the white paper goes further by pointing out that "to retain expertise in the system and ensure children continue to benefit from the best talent in local authorities, we expect that some individuals working in local authority teams will leave to set up new trusts or join existing ones and become academy sponsors."

The other clear policy intention is for schools to join multi-academy trusts and it sees trusts as being better than local authorities. "When every school is an academy, groups of schools will be able to span geographic boundaries, with the best MATs expanding to run schools in our toughest areas in a way that no high-performing local authority ever could. This provides real accountability, competitive pressure and choice – improving performance, enabling innovation and



Agony Uncle

ANTONY POWER

Partner at Michelmores law firm

Local authorities should be cautious about setting up trusts

scaling success."

While the government has decided to not directly compel every school to become an academy, the policy intention of every school becoming an academy remains. The government wants to "take new powers to direct schools to become academies in local authority areas which are underperforming or where the local authority no longer has capacity to maintain its schools." Given the unprecedented pressures on local authority budgets and education funding being heavily weighted in favour of promoting a move away from local authority involvement, any local authority (however good) seeking to continue running schools may well find itself swimming upstream.

That said, could it be a potential model?

The short answer is probably more of a maybe than a yes. There is a maybe (but not a definite maybe) because the Local Government Association is pushing for it. Roy Perry, chairman of the association's children and young people board, has said: "For parents, who are far more concerned with the quality of their child's education in the classroom than the legal status of the school, it is the council that they still frequently and naturally turn to for advice and support." So it is conceivable that as legislation progresses, the government may wish to provide some options for local authorities.

While Camden council in north London has set up an education company, the cabinet report noted that its main purpose

was to "ensure the long-term stability and effectiveness of the partnership in relation to school improvement, rather than for the company to become an academy sponsor... however, it would still be open for the company to consider its role in relation to academy sponsorship, as the policy landscape becomes clearer. It is understood that under the current regulations it is the secretary of state who makes the decision about who is or is not an academy sponsor."

So at this stage, there is a very clear policy intention for all schools to convert and join a multi-academy trust. There is a clear intention for local authorities to spend significantly less money and have a clearly defined, albeit narrow, role in education that does not include running schools. Therefore, unless and until there is a clear signal by the government that there are realistic prospects of local authorities being in a viable position to have the resources to set up sustainable companies, I would be cautious about advising local authorities to devote significant resources to setting up a multi-academy trust.

That said, when it comes to government policy I would never say never but I would advise all local authorities to start to think now what relationship they want to have with their schools in the new educational landscape. Whether or not the local authority is running a school, its role is to promote the economic well-being of its area, so good schools providing a good education is always going to be a key to any successful strategy. Successful relationships between local authorities and schools will always be vital.

REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS
OF THE WEEK

To view individual blogs visit
www.schoolsweek.co.uk/reviews



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

What did memory evolve to do?

Jonathan Firth

"Human memory research has largely ignored our evolutionary history", Jonathan Firth writes before he seeks to make amends. He describes how considering objects when mentally preparing for a bank robbery, a zombie apocalypse, or a grasslands scenario has different effects on memory — and considers theoretical explanations why objects are more memorable in a grasslands scene. He goes on to offer evolutionary explanations for some of the most robust research findings on memory: the spacing effect, for example, makes sense if we consider that a one-off problem isn't worth remembering, but "if something happens periodically with time gaps in between — a type of food that grows seasonally, migrating predators or occasional floods, for example" — it's well worth remembering the details. "Clearly," Firth concludes, "we can't deliver entire school courses via a grasslands scenario", but it's worth understanding memory better.

From Dinner with Simon Schama and tea with Michael Gove to designing independent enquiries with year 9

Paula Lobo

As her starting point Paula Lobo takes an event at which Simon Schama lamented that "pupils often arrive at universities woefully unprepared for independent study — mainly because exam demands leave little room for independent learning". Lobo explains the year 9 enquiry she designed to make amends for this and the results. What makes this post particularly worthwhile is her discussion of the mistakes she made and the refinements they led to: the difficulties of designing

independent and rigorous study comes alive as she sets out exactly what happened when she "let students have a 'free rein' on their selection of which topic to research, and then sent them, with a big smile on my face and an open sweep of my hand as if to say 'Go! Be free! For all this is yours! Discover the delights instore!', into the school library." Alongside helpful advice for any teacher seeking to balance structure and independence, this post is a model for writing about teaching from which other teachers can learn.

The Power of Habit in schools

Steve Adcock

"I recommend *The Power of Habit* by Charles Duhigg," Steve Adcock begins. "It's a sharp, helpful book which shines a light on the role that habits play in our lives." Duhigg cites evidence that 40 per cent of our actions each day are habits rather than decisions and talks about cultures as communities of habit. He argues: "We talk a lot about school policies and systems which are usually public — but not so much about habits and routines — which are usually hidden." With this in mind, he takes on Duhigg's idea of "keystone habits", which can shift organisations, and suggests a series of keystone habits he'd look for in a successful school, from regular question-level analysis to "open classroom doors where it's perfectly normal for teachers and school leaders to wander into their colleagues' lessons". A thoughtful take on a thought-provoking book.

Where are the female headteachers?

Bansi Kara

Bansi Kara looks at women's promotion to leadership with a particular focus on interruption. She begins by noting the disproportionate promotion of men to school leadership, and the particular advantage in business of being called John: "seventeen men called John (or Jean) and seven women" run FTSE 100 companies. She goes on to discuss a study examining interruptions, which showed that two speakers of the same sex will interrupt roughly equally, but 96 per cent of interruptions in mixed-sex conversations are by men. She suggests that verbal domination acts as another barrier to the desire to be promoted and that women "have to train themselves to deal with interruption so they can be heard". Kara then makes productive use of the distinction between "askers" and "guessers": those happy to ask and receive a "no" and those who prefer to guess rather than risk a "no". "If we want more women in headships," she argues, "we have to coach and mentor them to be confident askers." Her point about interruption is the one that has stuck with me since reading her post, but it is one of many interesting and challenging observations.

BOOK REVIEW

The Power Paradox: How we gain and lose influence

Author: Dacher Keltner

Publisher: Penguin Press

ISBN-10: 1594205248

ISBN-13: 978-1594205248

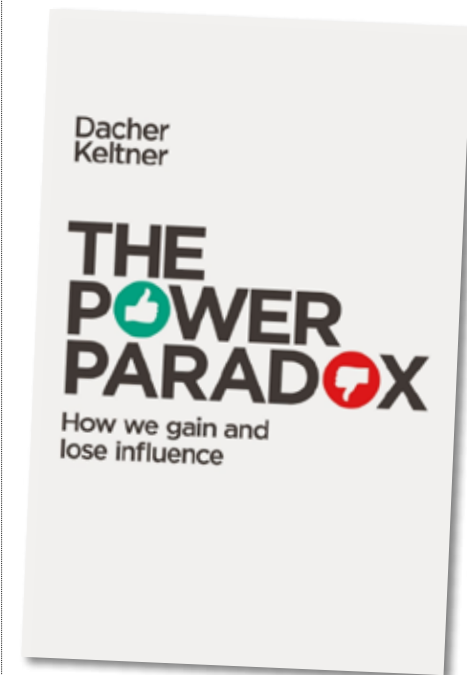
Reviewer: Ian Comfort



It is a sad fact that far too many people in positions of power fall from grace once it becomes clear that that power is being misused. The premise that power can and often does have a corrupting effect is not new. The historian and moralist, Lord Acton, coined a now well-known phrase in his letter to Bishop Creighton in 1887: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." He was not the first to echo these thoughts. William Pitt the Elder said something similar in a speech to the House of Lords in 1770: "Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it."

Professor Keltner's latest pint-sized exploration of power dynamics in the 21st century sets out clearly the power paradox that affects all of us who are in positions of power. He suggests that "we gain capacity to make a difference in the world by enhancing the lives of others, but the very experience of having power and privilege leads us to behave, in our worst moments, like impulsive out-of-control sociopaths." Keltner draws his experiences and reflections of power from a career observing the exchanges of business executives and politicians. However, if he had spent time observing those of us involved in education, he would no doubt have drawn the same conclusion. Many involved in schools and academies at all levels have wasted the power to make a difference in the world, and particularly to the lives of children.

Keltner is of the view that we have been guided for too long by Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, a book read by many who study leadership and management. He argues that power is wielded most effectively when it's used responsibly, by people who are attuned to and engaged with the needs and interests of others. His research suggests that empathy and social intelligence are vastly more important to acquiring and exercising power



than are force and deception.

In a socially intelligent model of power, heart and strength work together, and the focus is on collaboration and inclusivity, resolving conflict peacefully, and treating all with respect and dignity.

Unfortunately, having power makes many individuals impulsive and poorly attuned to others, making them prone to act abusively and lose the esteem of their peers. What people want from leaders — social intelligence — is what too often is damaged

by the experience of power.

Keltner sets out 20 power principles that are as relevant to the classroom teacher as to a chief executive of an academy trust. They provide a framework that helps us to handle the power paradox. His focus on power being about making a difference in the world, to advance

"Social intelligence is too often damaged by the experience of power"

the greater good, and being gained and maintained through a focus on others is a pleasant change from the Machiavellian approach of "hard power" that so often leads to abuse.

Ian Comfort is the chief executive of Academies Enterprise Trust

NEXT WEEK

The Confident Teacher

By Alex Quigley

Reviewed by Gwen Nelson

What have you been working on?

We used a combination of lab-based computer tasks and computational learning models to compare how adolescents and adults learn to make choices, based on different types of feedback.

Adolescent and adult volunteers played a computer task, in which they saw different pairs of abstract symbols on a computer screen, and had to choose one by pressing a button. The symbol they chose could either result in a reward (winning a point), a punishment (losing a point), or no outcome. Participants all wanted to get as many points as possible, as they could earn up to £10 for a high score.

Within each pair, one symbol was more likely to be associated with a good outcome than the other. However, at the start of the task, participants didn't know which symbol was which and had to try to learn which was more likely to result in a good outcome through trial and error based on feedback.

Sometimes, participants would also find out what would have happened if they'd chosen the other option.

We also used computational models to help to interpret our results. Different learning processes can be modelled using mathematical models, which simulate how someone would play the game if they were using those specific

RESEARCH CORNER**Q&A****EMMA KILFORD**

Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience,
University College London

**Rewards, not punishments, help teenagers to learn**

learning processes. This is important, as in everyday life decisions are not always associated with either a good or bad outcome – we have to learn through experience.

What did you find?

We found that adolescents and adults were equally good at learning from the rewards which options would result in the best outcomes. However, adolescents were not as good at using the bad outcomes (punishments) to guide their future choices. We also found that while

adults showed improvements in learning when they saw the outcome of the other option, adolescents were less likely to use this information to guide their future choices.

What are the implications for schools?

Our data suggests that when rewards and punishments are equal in value (eg, winning a point compared with losing a point), adolescents are more likely to take the rewarding information into account in future choices than the punishment. Therefore, in some cases,

positive feedback may have more of an effect than negative feedback on learning.

However, this type of study where participants are learning from abstract symbols in a quiet environment without other things going on is very different to learning in the classroom, where many different factors are involved. Studies of classroom-based learning would need to be done before any real-life implications could be asserted.

What do you hope the impact will be?

We hope our study will draw attention to the fact that learning and decision-making don't rely on a single, unitary system, but instead involve the co-ordination of a range of different processes that may show different patterns of development both in adolescence and across the lifespan. For example, rewarding and punishing feedback do not necessarily rely on the same systems or have the same effect on behaviour in everyone, but may differ according to variation between individuals, including, but not limited to, their age.

The Computational Development of Reinforcement Learning during Adolescence was published in PLOS Computational Biology



A week in Westminster

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

THURSDAY:

Civil Service World reports that Edward Chapman, a former higher executive officer at the Department for Education (DfE), has been jailed after he conned the department out of £1.1 million.

He diverted cash from bogus swimming companies into his own accounts to buy property. But his plan didn't go swimmingly after his mum, a DfE deputy director, doxed him in.

He has been sentenced to three years and four months in prison.

Meanwhile, the DfE press office announced today that it has set up a new blog on which it will "review", "rebut" and "respond" to news stories.

In time it will "also include myth-busters". Week in Westminster looks forward to myth-busting the DfE's myth-busters.

FRIDAY:

Fancy earning £800 a day? (Who wouldn't!) You might be in luck.

Sir* Paul Marshall, top honcho at academy chain Ark and major Lib Dem donor, is stepping down from his lead non-executive director role at the DfE and his position is up for grabs.

WiW understands Marshall, the co-founder of hedge fund Marshall Wace, donated his remuneration for his DfE role to charity. Well, if you're worth £465 million, and in the top 10 of *The Sunday Times's* rich list, then £800-a-day is small change.

Fun fact: Marshall's son is in the band Mumford and Sons. They play the banjos. A lot.

Want to apply? Benefits include £20,000 for just 24 days' work a year and the potential for a top gong.

*As of two weeks ago

MONDAY:

Minutes from two Ofsted board meetings were released today. The April agenda is jam-packed with titbits, including that the education watchdog is appointing "up to" three new non-executive directors (there's a lot of them going around). That will take the

number of board members up to ten.

But if you want to know what the board discussed at their meeting last week, you're out of luck. Those minutes give scant detail about the decisions made or content of the discussion. Which is a shame, as they are usually one of the more informative bodies.

Still, all is not lost. Despite not knowing what they spoke about, we do know they had sandwiches for lunch between 12.30-2pm and were joined by Lorna Fitzjohn, regional director for the West Midlands. Well played, Lorna; turn up for the free egg sarnies and avoid the boring (we assume, although we don't know because there are no details) meeting. WiW likes your style.

TUESDAY:

The DfE put out details of transactions of more than £500 on the "electronic purchasing card solution" (basically a credit card for the civil service) today.

Someone spent £549.99 on "Dragon Naturally Speaking Professional". WiW got excited and thought this might mean the DfE needed to train some dragons so it

could launch a Game of Thrones-style battle with Nicky Morgan, Mother of Dragons, the Un-Goved, Queen of the Academies, (Non)-Breaker of (Academy) Chains, etc, at the helm.

But alas, it's just some software for "speech recognition". BORING.

WEDNESDAY:

Today we were treated to a lovely update on the DfE's new blog (see Thursday). The latest post said there had been a number of misleading stories in the media (no names, but there was a weblink to the *Sunday Times*) about gender identity and gender reassignment in schools, before laying out some facts (ahem) on relevant policies.

Of the five most recent blog posts, three include some sort of complaint about media coverage.

WiW can't help but think the blog is essentially turning into a neat round-up of stories the department doesn't want people to read, all in one place!

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEEK FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS

School Bulletin



Pupils at Oaklands School in Middlesex with John Laing training instructors

Garden furniture for local residents

Pupils with severe learning difficulties at Oaklands School in Middlesex got a helping hand from John Laing training instructors to make wooden benches and planters for local elderly residents.

Anne Clinton, Oakland's headteacher, says the six-week project has been particularly important to the pupils because they "have made a product for other people which they know will be appreciated and enjoyed."

"This gives our pupils the opportunity to learn that their work is important and valued, and a sense of pride."

The benches and planters will now be enjoyed by residents who are supported by the Isleworth and Hounslow Charity, which provides accommodation and support for those in need.

Pat Hammond of the charity says: "The residents are very happy with the benches and planters, they are extremely well made and look great outside Raybell Lodge [a block of 26 flats]."

Clinton added: "We encourage our pupils to learn skills that help to prepare them for employment in the community. We are very proud of them."

Science lab in £8m primary building



Avonwood Primary School pupils celebrating achieving Earth Charter status
Inset: Scientist Dame Kay Davies (centre left) at the official opening

Geneticist Dame Kay Davies officially opened the UK's first Earth Charter school earlier this month when she cut the ribbon to a new £8 million Avonwood primary school building in Bournemouth that includes a purpose-built science laboratory.

As an Earth Charter school, the primary will follow the principles of the Rio-based organisation that promotes tolerance and peace, sustainability and democracy.

Debbie Godfrey-Phaure, chief executive of Avonbourne multi-academy trust, says: "With the Earth Charter principles underpinning everything we do at

Avonwood we are building the foundations that will help every child contribute to a better world."

Speaking at the opening, Dame Kay – who helped to identify the gene that causes Duchenne muscular dystrophy – said: "If we can get very young children to discover the wonders of science from the outset of their education then we are more likely to nurture the scientists of the future."

Godfrey-Phaure added that she was "very proud" to have a "fantastic new building that provides the best start to a child's education by giving them the very best facilities, such as the science lab".

Teens help toddlers in Norfolk scheme

FEATURED

A programme that pairs teenagers at risk of disengaging from school as mentors to young children has been run in Norfolk for the first time.

Launched in February for 18 weeks, a small group of year 9 and 10 students from City Academy Norwich have spent one afternoon a week out of school working with children at nearby West Earlham infant and nursery school.

The Teens and Toddlers scheme combines work experience with classroom training, and aims to teach interpersonal skills to the older pupils while "building their confidence" and their "sense of responsibility".

James Daley and Pauline Wiltshire, programme leads at West Earlham, report positive impacts on both sets of pupils.

Wiltshire says: "The aim is for the young people to explore their potential. Supporting the toddlers provides an opportunity to develop their communication skills and to demonstrate their responsibility and commitment."

"These are transferable skills that they can then use with their families, friends, in their relationships with teachers and peers at school, and in the world of work."

"It's gone really well. The young people have been so amazing with the children, they really do empathise with them, and they've come out of themselves and shown their commitment and responsibility."



From top clockwise: City Academy Norwich students Charlie Marshall, Abi Gray and Shania Hoban working with children at West Earlham infant and nursery school

Abi Gray, a year 10 City Academy Norwich student, says she has reaped the benefits of the programme.

"Even if I am having a bad day, the children cheer me up."

"I feel happy because I've made them happy and come in and made things different for them. I've learned how to be patient. You've got to talk to them in a sensible way, you've got to be nice and calm."

Shania Hoban, a year 9 student, added: "Whatever's going on at school, coming to the infant school takes my mind off everything, it helps me."

"Seeing the children and being able to spend time with them is fun and it's nice when you can see that they like it and they're happy."

"It's making a difference to them. Some of the children find it harder to learn than others and being able to help them is fun."

As part of the Teens to Toddlers programme, the students are working towards an entry level three award in personal and social development.

After they complete the programme at the end of the summer term, they will be invited to an awards event in London to celebrate their achievement.



OFQUAL UP FOR AWARD

Ofqual has been nominated for a public sector award in two categories for a consultation that sought pupils' views on marking reviews and appeals.

The watchdog wrote to headteachers in 6,500 schools in February to ask for their help in recruiting pupils to take a short survey on marking, with a chance to win an iPad.

It was the first time Ofqual specifically sought the views of young people, and followed the launch of a consultation on how Ofqual deals with reviews of and appeals against the marks awarded by exam boards.

The campaign, *GCSE, AS and A-level reform – what do students think?*, has now been shortlisted in "insight awards" and "best use of evaluation research", in the UK public sector communications awards (PSCA).

Chris Shadforth, associate director of communications at Ofqual, says: "The response we had to our campaign was fantastic, with more 1,400 students taking part. And because the idea was developed with colleagues from across Ofqual, we're especially delighted to have been shortlisted."

The annual awards are open to all organisations within the public sector; Ofqual will be up against the likes of HMRC, South Yorkshire Police, and Westminster City Council.

Winners will be announced at a ceremony at the Emirates Stadium in London on July 14.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

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

Nia Salt is to take over as principal of Ormiston Ilkeston Enterprise academy when the current head Dave Smith leaves next month.

She has been vice-principal at Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy, in Stoke-on-Trent for the past five years.

Before joining Ormiston, Salt was assistant principal at Sir William Stanier academy, in Crewe.

She says she believes, above everything else, in "hard work" and "graft", something that she says she instils into her pupils.

"The one key reason I think I have been successful is from hard work and application. You don't just get by on your talent, it is about the work you put into it."

Salt also worked as a consultant at East Cheshire Council and led a unit for pupils with behavioural difficulties at Victoria community school, in Crewe.

She has a degree in sociology and psychology from the University of Manchester, and a PGCE from Keele.

Kirstie Fulthorpe is the new regional academies director for primary schools in London and the south east at Oasis Community Learning.

The former principal of Harris primary academy Philip Lane, north London, says



Nia Salt



Kirstie Fulthorpe



Matthew Warren

her new role will focus on developing other staff to become as "effective as possible", particularly the trust's principals. She will provide both "challenge and support" when she visits the schools.

She also says that her aim for the academies is to have their overall effectiveness judged as 100 per cent good and 50 per cent outstanding by Ofsted.

Fulthorpe says she was always "passionate" about education, even as a toddler, and recalls playing headteacher with a Fisher Price Play School.

She has worked mainly in primary schools and early years education for the past 24 years, including a spell as senior officer responsible for primary quality standards at the London borough of Islington. She was also an Ofsted inspector.

Matthew Warren has been appointed headteacher at Presdales school,

Hertfordshire, an 11 to 18 girls' academy with a mixed sixth form.

Warren, who starts in September, is currently deputy head at nearby Roundwood Park school, and says he is "privileged" to continue developing "outstanding academic achievement" as well as "all-round" students at Presdales, qualities that he believes are of "equal importance".

"I am passionate about ensuring that all students reach and surpass their potential and that they develop attributes and learning habits that will support them in careers that may not have even been thought of as yet.

"At Roundwood Park, we work very closely with the other schools in Harpenden and St Albans. I look forward to developing close working relationships with schools that are local to Presdales at both primary and secondary phase."

Warren, who has more than 16 years' teaching experience, studied trumpet at the Royal Academy of Music before completing a PGCE at Middlesex.

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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This unique opportunity is the perfect role for an expert in his or her educational field, who is looking for the next challenge in their career and who wants to move away from the constraints of a full-time role.

Applications are welcome from anywhere within England and Wales; the role will be home-based with travel where necessary.

If you have a proven track record of delivering high quality results in education leadership and improvement at a senior, regional or national level we would like to hear from you. Please email your CV, with a short covering letter to AssociatesTribal@tribalgroup.com by close of play on Friday 8th July 2016.



STANGROUND ACADEMY

Situated in one of the UK's fastest growing cities, the Stanground Academy, in Peterborough, is transforming the life chances of its pupils by ensuring that every child can succeed, despite the challenges they may face.

The academy offers state of the art facilities and an array of extracurricular activities to promote and enhance learning. Our success is based on an effective partnership between pupils, staff and parents, building positive, trusting and long lasting relationships to support pupils to achieve their best. We are part of the Greenwood Academies Trust (GAT) which has a proven track record in school improvement. The Trust provides centralised services and support to enable staff to focus on teaching.

We currently have the below opportunities to join our middle and senior leadership teams. To find out more please visit www.greenwoodacademies.org/vacancies/. Alternatively, please call our Recruitment Line on 0115 748 3344.

HEAD OF YEAR

(Ref: 15-16/STA/047)

MPS/UPR plus TLR 1B (£9,284)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

(Ref: 15-16/STA/051)

Leadership 18 - 24 £58,677 - £67,963

Required from January 2017 or earlier if possible

Closing date 27th June 2016 at noon

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

SALARY DEPENDING ON EXPERIENCE AND PREVIOUS SUCCESS
LOCATION: LUTON, BEDFORDSHIRE



The Shared Learning Trust is looking to appoint a CEO from January 1st or earlier for the right calibre candidate to play a leading role within a family of schools in Bedfordshire.

The Trust is comprised of four academies, two secondary Academies with sixth form provisions and two primary academies. Overall, the academies enjoy good success rates and positive relationships with their students and the communities they serve.

We are now seeking to appoint a Chief Executive Officer to provide the Trust with strong senior strategic leadership and who will promote its benefits through this time of significant opportunity and challenges. The successful candidate will build on existing good practice to raise standards, strengthen partnerships, and ensure our Trust is well supported to deliver an excellent education to the children and young people of the community.

We would like from you:

- an experienced leader with a proven track record in the broader educational arena, including experience of inspections
- the capacity to ensure that a high quality educational experience is available for all children and young people
- successful experience of senior management in a complex organisation, including resource and financial management with strong commercial

- awareness and understanding of funding streams and cost management
- a relationship builder able to articulate and communicate organisational vision and values to a wide range of stakeholders across the wider community
- a strategic thinker who will grow the Trust

We can offer you:

- a unique family of schools, 2 primary, 2 secondary, a Teaching School and Sixth Form provision
- fantastic young people who are "eager to learn and exemplary in their attitudes to their work" (Vale Academy Ofsted, 2014) and who are "hugely proud of their Academy" (West Academy Ofsted, 2014)
- a role where you can really make an impact growing and leading our Trust
- competitive benefits package

For further information and to return completed applications please contact: Kevin Martin, Human Resources Manager

Tel: Kevin Martin on 01582 211226

Email: academyrecruitment@thesharedlearningtrust.org.uk

Closing Date: 27th June (9am)

Interview Date: w/c 4 July 2016

The Shared Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all its learners.

This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check. Our schools have excellent links to the M1 motorway, National Rail networks and Luton Airport. We are 30 minutes from London.



STANGROUND ACADEMY

TEACHERS OF SCIENCE

(Ref: 15-16/STA/049-050)

Salary: MPS/UPR

1 x Permanent and 1 x Fixed Term Maternity Cover | Full and part time considered
Required from January 2017 or earlier if possible

Closing date: 27 June 2016 at noon

A fantastic opportunity for a passionate Teacher of Science to join the Stanground Academy. Newly Qualified and experienced Teachers are welcome to apply.

The Stanground Academy offers state of the art facilities and an array of extracurricular activities to promote and enhance learning. Our success is based on an effective partnership between pupils, staff and parents, building positive, trusting and long lasting relationships to support pupils to be the best they possibly can be.

Successful applicants will be champions of science and passionate about helping young learners achieve, they will be able to demonstrate a range of teaching styles and behaviour management techniques to inspire and motivate pupils. The ideal Teacher of Science must be able to work effectively as part of team and be willing to play a part in the further development of the academy.

The academy is part of the Greenwood Academies Trust (GAT) which has a proven track record in school improvement. The Trust provides centralised services and support to enable staff

to focus on teaching. Being part of the Trust means that we are able to share specialist best practice and work collaboratively with colleagues in other academies. When you join us as a Teacher, you can be certain that we'll advance your professional development and give you the opportunities to build your career across our group of academies.

There are two positions available, one permanent and one fixed term to cover a period of maternity leave. Part time and full time applications will be considered for each.

Visits to the academy are warmly welcomed; please contact **Pauline Poli**, PA to the Principal, on 01733 821430 or email ppoli@stangroundacademy.org.

For application forms and further information, please visit our website.

www.greenwoodacademies.org/vacancy/11572/

Alternatively, please call our Recruitment Line on 0115 748 3344

We also please ask that you complete our Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form by visiting: www.surveymonkey.com/r/NDNDSQ2

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SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

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.