

SCHOOLS WEEK

A digital newspaper determined to get past the bluster and explain the facts.

Proof of concept?
A visit to a specialist
maths school



Ministers' Covid
ineptitude made
me retire early



Gav gives Tory pal
DfE job with no
competition



The £2m legal row
at centre of 'seismic'
MIS changes



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**DFE WARNED ABOUT NEED FOR
SPRINKLERS IN 2017, 2018, 2019.
NOW, IT'S 2020 AND ...**



... 'DEVASTATION'

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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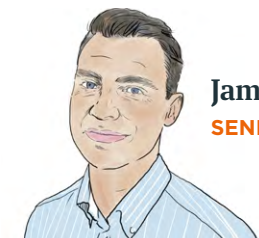
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'We'll never sell Oak lessons', founders pledge



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'An excellent behaviour guide that skirts thornier issues'

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Amid the DfE blizzard, teachers are no snowflakes

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'We must be more inclusive' says Inspiration Trust head

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'Dithering' ministers urged to reveal exam plans

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Ministers have been told to stop "dithering" and give schools clarity on what will happen with exams next year, following the Scottish government's decision to cancel some tests and push others back.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, has promised exams will take place and that full plans – including whether or not they will be delayed to allow more teaching time – will be set out later this month.

Unions seemed none the wiser over what those plans may be, despite a meeting with Nick Gibb, the schools minister, and Dame Glenys Stacey, the interim chief of regulator Ofqual.

Meanwhile, John Swinney, Scotland's education minister, said this week that National 5 exams would be replaced next year by teacher assessments and coursework and that Higher exams would take place later than usual.

The decision north of the border also follows the publication of an independent "rapid review" of national qualifications in 2020. The Scottish government has accepted almost all its recommendations, prompting criticism of the UK government's reluctance to hold a similar inquiry.

Unions also believe that ministers' resolve to hold exams in 2021 could prevent the creation of a proper "plan B" if schools are forced to partially close again.

"There is sadly little sign as yet that a serious plan B is on the table," said Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union.

She said the announcement in Scotland "dispels the ridiculous myth propagated by the government in England that you cannot prepare a contingency for fear it may distract from plan A". The DfE was "languishing in a state of denial about this year's fiasco".

Speaking earlier this year, Sally Collier, the former Ofqual chief, said schools needed to know about next year's exams "before the summer break ideally".

Bousted said: "Teachers, students and parents in England need to have a much clearer picture of what counts in examinations next year, and what form the assessment will take. This is not the time for dithering."



She added that the UK government's resistance to an independent review reflected a "failure to act matched with an inexcusable tardiness".

The *Sunday Times* reported last week that the government's plan B – should pupils be unable to sit tests – is to allow them to sit a single exam paper later in the year.

Ofqual has also mooted online tests as a potential alternative.

The newspaper also reported that plan C would be to use teachers' predictions of pupils' performance, but this would only come into effect if exams could not go ahead.

The *Sunday Times* said many schools had instructed teachers to prepare "invigilated mock exams" at the end of the year in case of disruption.

This follows concerns earlier this year about the validity of mock tests after the government announced they could form the basis of appeals against grades issued in 2020.

In a Teacher Tapp poll this week, 30 per cent of teachers said their school was planning mock exams with an external invigilator this term. Forty-seven per cent said their school was not; 18 per cent did not know.

Reaction to Scotland's decision has been mixed.

Steve Chalke, the founder of the academy

chain Oasis Community Learning, told the *Today* programme on Radio 4 yesterday that scrapping tests in England was "the only wise thing to do".

"To go ahead is too big a risk ... playing with young people's lives."

But the Parents and Teachers Excellence campaign group has urged people to sign an open letter calling for exams to go ahead. Organised by Stuart Lock, chief executive of Advantage Schools, it states "all pupils must be given the opportunity to show their abilities regardless of their background, holding exams are the only fair way to do this".

This can be done with flexible exam timing, more options on exam papers and with grade boundaries consistent with 2019 results, the letter adds.

Setting out their own proposals for next year, the five education unions said that some grade inflation should be allowed, but not as much as in 2020 with centre-assessed grades (CAGs).

They also suggested that staged assessments "along with other agreed evidence such as coursework" could be used to determine CAGs as a back-up for those unable to sit exams.

But the Association of School and College Leaders said it was "increasingly frustrated at the ongoing lack of clarity from the government over what it plans to do about these exams".

News

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Schools take £900m Covid hit, but few get cash help

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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New figures show that the cost of Covid safety measures for schools across England has soared to almost £400 million.

And in a "double whammy" on school budgets, missed income opportunities following the pandemic have now surpassed £500 million.

A survey from the NAHT school leaders' union also shows that just 16 per cent of schools have recouped any money from an additional funding pot promised by ministers.

Most of those who have accessed the government's exceptional costs fund said they were reimbursed less than half their Covid spend.

Paul Whiteman, the NAHT's general secretary, said heads were "baffled" by the government's refusal to fund the safety measures.

"These costs are not optional for schools, they are required by the government's own guidance. Schools need the government to make good these unanticipated but necessary costs in order to protect school budgets so that pupils' education is not adversely affected."

The union's survey of more than 2,000 leaders found schools had spent an average £8,017 on Covid-related costs this term alone.

This equates to a £170.2 million spend nationwide, and comes on top of the estimated £212 million spent to get pupils back to school in June and July.

Ninety-nine per cent of heads reported spending money on cleaning supplies, while 83 per cent have bought personal protective equipment and 78 per cent signage, cones, tapes and barriers. Seventy-four per cent have additional staff costs, such as cleaners or site staff.

There has also been a 17 percentage point rise in the number of schools spending more on teaching assistants as other staff members have been forced to self-isolate, many as a result of a lack of testing kits.

Whiteman warned that "every pound spent on new safety measures, is a pound that can no longer be spent on pupils' education".



The NAHT also found schools were losing an average £9,755 in income this term as a result of the pandemic. This equates to more than £200 million when extrapolated nationwide, and comes on top of an estimated £330 million lost last year.

The government had an exceptional costs fund last term to allow schools to recoup costs, but it did not cover cleaning associated with pupils returning following partial school closures. Claims could only be made if a school had a suspected or confirmed Covid case.

Ministers have so far held firm in refusing to extend the fund to this term.

But NAHT's data shows that 52 per cent of those who received exceptional costs funding said it reimbursed less than half of their additional spend.



Paul Whiteman

The union will now vote at its conference today on a motion that could put industrial action on the table.

The motion warns that the pandemic has "burdened schools with significant additional costs", and that if upcoming teacher pay rises are not fully funded, the union will use "all means at its disposal, up to and including industrial action", to achieve its aims.

Government figures show that as of mid-September, schools had claimed £104 million against the standard expenditure categories in the exceptional costs fund, but had received payments of £58 million.

It is expected the government will have to secure additional funding from the Treasury to run such a scheme again.

And some in the sector say that the large reserves held by schools could be seen as a sign that they could afford to take the hit, as other businesses have been forced to do.

For instance, figures published in 2018 for council schools alone show they are sitting on £1.8 billion of surpluses.

Of those, £580 million were deemed as "excess surplus" – anything above 5 per cent of a secondary school's total income or 8 per cent for primaries.

The DfE has been approached for comment.

Fire-damaged schools had no sprinklers

JOHN DICKENS & SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SCHOOLSWEEK

Fire chiefs are demanding mandatory sprinklers in new and refurbished schools after two fires forced more than 1,000 Derbyshire pupils to learn remotely.

Neither of the two schools severely damaged at the weekend had sprinklers.

The fires also expose the Department for Education's failure to meet its 2019 deadline to respond to a call for evidence that school fire safety rules are "fit for purpose". The call followed the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in west London in which 72 people died.

Gavin Tomlinson, Derbyshire's chief fire officer and the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) lead for sprinklers, said the matter had become urgent. "The longer we delay it, there are schools built every year without sprinklers.

"A school is right in the heart of a community, providing our children with the education they need. So to see this taken away at a time when schools are just starting to recover following Covid lockdown restrictions, is both a huge shock and totally unacceptable when there are fire safety measures that can prevent such devastation."

The first fire partly destroyed the 360-pupil St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy in Darley Abbey on Saturday. The primary school was built around 2004.

Amanda Greaves, its executive headteacher, said staff and pupils were "absolutely devastated".

Large parts of Ravensdale Infant School, less than four miles away in Mickleover, were damaged in the early hours of Monday.

The neighbouring junior school was saved, but the 650 pupils from both schools were sent home on Monday for remote lessons until the site became accessible.

Investigations are ongoing, but the fire service said the fire at Ravensdale, which was built in 1962, was deliberately lit. The police said that a link between the two incidents had not been ruled out.

The NFCC said there were about 1,500 fires in schools across the UK every year, disrupting the education of about 90,000 students.

Schools Week revealed last year that sprinklers were installed in just 3 per cent of English schools damaged by fire in the past five years.

INVESTIGATES



Ravensdale Infant School

Credit: Gavin Tomlinson



St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Credit: Gavin Tomlinson

A DfE spokesperson said this week sprinklers must be installed "where they are considered necessary to protect pupils and staff".

But Tomlinson said the current guidance allowed "a number of interpretations to the fitting of sprinklers".

"A number of loopholes... allows designers to take alternative approaches to fire safety."

In May last year, the DfE called for evidence on how to update the *Building Bulletin 100: design for fire safety in schools*.

It sought views on whether cladding should be banned for new school buildings higher than 18m and on sprinkler design - and limitations.

It followed the Hackitt review into Grenfell, which recommended fire safety regulations in schools should be reviewed.

The current Building Bulletin 100 guidance says all schools should have sprinklers apart from "a few low-risk schools". However, Schools Week

revealed in June 2017 that the proportion of new schools fitted with sprinklers had halved since 2010 to 35 per cent.

The department said the call for evidence response should be published soon when it launched a full public consultation.

Evonne Williams, Derby City's cabinet member for children and young people, said remote learning would be offered "until safe spaces can be agreed for bubbles of children and staff to move into".

The DfE spokesperson said it was working with the trust and council to support pupils.

"All schools are required to have an up-to-date fire risk assessment and to conduct regular fire drills. All new school buildings must be signed-off by an inspector to certify that they meet the requirements of building regulations. Where sprinklers are considered necessary to protect pupils and staff, they must be installed."

Timothy handed DfE job without competition

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

The education secretary has been accused of “trying to subvert process to help his political mates” after appointing an ally to a key government role without following usual procedures.

Nick Timothy, Theresa May’s former chief of staff, was also made a non-executive director at the Department for Education before officials had received a declaration of his interests.

Copies of correspondence, obtained by Schools Week under the Freedom of Information Act, show how officials rushed through the appointment at the behest of Gavin Williamson.

The pair are understood to be close allies. The education secretary served as chief whip while Timothy was in Downing St. The latter was also vocal in his support during Williamson’s challenging tenure at defence.

As a non-executive director, the former New Schools Network director will be paid an annual £15,000 for about 24 days’ work advising Williamson on policy.

Non-executive board members are usually appointed via a competitive process with multiple candidates considered for each role.

The DfE’s business case for Timothy’s appointment states that his “direct appointment” was a result of “no other candidates who could match Nick’s unique combination of skills, knowledge and experience”.

But Kate Green, the shadow education secretary, today called on Williamson to be “open and transparent in future, instead of trying to subvert process to help his political mates”.

“The public cannot trust a serially incompetent government that is unable even to check for conflicts of interest before making public appointments.”

In their due diligence on the appointment, officials highlighted existing allegations of cronyism over Timothy’s CBE in May’s resignation honours last year and his appointment to the organising committee for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Copies of correspondence also show they raised concerns the appointment could attract negative media coverage “particularly given his well-known views on the benefits of selective schools”.

Timothy is a vocal supporter of

grammar schools. He was at Downing St when the Conservatives enacted their botched attempt to lift the ban on new selective schools.

However, in its business case, the DfE said the due diligence check “did not find any reasons for concern about the appointment”.

The dossier also shows the department did not receive a declaration of interests from Timothy until after his appointment had been ratified. It claims this is because he was appointed directly, and that declarations would usually be made at the application stage.

“Direct appointment would both ensure that we can utilise Nick’s skills and experience more rapidly,” the DfE’s business case said.

“An open recruitment exercise would take several months, which would mean we would miss the opportunity for a new non executive board member to support us with the immediate challenges of implementing the agenda of a new PM and secretary of state.”

Timothy’s appointment was first proposed last August, shortly after Williamson took over education in late July. It was then put on hold twice before being rushed through earlier this year.

At the time, officials spoke of the need to “move asap” once Timothy was approved by Downing St, describing his appointment as a “high priority”.

One unnamed official who questioned whether Timothy had been through a competitive process was told the direct appointment was supported by Richard Pennycook, the lead non-executive director, Jonathan Slater, the department’s permanent secretary, and Innes Taylor, a special adviser.

Timothy’s appointment, announced in April, also came shortly after the department expanded the role of non-executive directors to “take more in-depth roles”.

Timothy served as an adviser to May when she was home secretary before going on to head the New Schools Network. He left the charity to run May’s successful Conservative leadership campaign in 2016, and then served as her joint chief of staff with Fiona Hill until 2017, when both resigned following the Tories’ poor election performance.

Since then, he has been a columnist for *The Daily Telegraph* and released a book, *Remaking One Nation: The Future of Conservatism*.

A DfE spokesperson it had followed guidance in the

appointment and that Timothy’s register of interests would be published alongside its annual report.

“As this was a direct appointment, we conducted due diligence checks ahead prior to the appointment.”

Timothy was approached for comment.

TIMELINE

- July 24, 2019: Gavin Williamson appointed education secretary
- August 5, 2019: Business case first submitted for appointment of Nick Timothy
- August 6: Appointment process put “on hold”
- December 17: Business case resubmitted. Officials say Williamson “would now like to proceed”
- December 18: On hold again
- February 17: Process restarts. DfE signs off appointment
- March 3: Proposed appointment sent to prime minister’s appointments unit for sign-off, with officials stressing “urgency in this case”
- March 30: Downing St approves appointment “with immediate effect”
- April 2: Officials discuss an “exception” to their standard operating procedure to add Timothy to HR system
- April 7: Email says officials are still “chasing” Timothy for his declaration of interests
- April 14: Officials say they “haven’t yet had a completed register of interest from Nick”, and ask if announcement can still go ahead
- April 16: DfE announces appointment

WHAT THE RULES SAY

Non-statutory government guidance states that NEDs are recruited through “fair and transparent competition”.

However there’s a lack of guidance about when direct appointments are allowed.

Other guidance on public appointments suggests they can only take place in “exceptional cases”.



Nick Timothy

Gavin Williamson

Damning audit found DfE broke data laws

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The Department for Education has been warned it could be fined if it fails to get its house in order following a damning audit that found it broke the law over handling pupil data.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has concluded that the DfE failed to meet several articles of the general data protection regulations (GDPR), which govern the management and use of data across Europe.

The audit, carried out in February and March, was prompted by complaints from the human rights groups Liberty and DefendDigitalMe about the national pupil database (NPD). The database holds information on millions of past and present school pupils.

It found that data protection "was not being prioritised", which had "severely impacted the DfE's ability to comply with the UK's data protection laws".

It follows a series of investigations by Schools Week that revealed how the government tried to collect pupil nationality and country of birth data to share with the Home Office for immigration control. Our reports and a high-profile campaign by children's rights groups resulted in a widespread boycott. The plan was later scrapped.

Schools Week revealed last November that the DfE was facing potential action over "wide-ranging and serious concerns" about its data sharing. This week, the ICO shed fresh light on the extent to which data protection laws were breached.

The watchdog issued 139 recommendations for improvement, with more than 60 per cent classified as "urgent or high priority".

The ICO said the DfE was "voluntarily complying" with the recommendations, but that it would be monitoring progress against "pre-agreed timescales" and that enforcement, which could include a fine, "will follow if progress falls behind the schedule".

The audit, which looked into how the NPD, learning records service and "internally held databases" at the DfE were managed, found there was "no formal proactive oversight of any function of information governance, including



data protection, records management, risk management, data sharing and information security".

This, with a lack of formal documentation, meant the department "cannot demonstrate accountability to the GDPR".

The inclusion of the learning records service database followed revelations that it had been accessed by GB Group, a data intelligence company whose clients include 32Red, Betfair and other gambling companies.

The audit found that "internal cultural barriers and attitudes" were preventing the implementation of an "effective system of information governance", and that the role of the DfE's data protection officer was not meeting all the requirements of the GDPR.

The DfE also had "no policy framework or document control" in place, and policies that did exist "demonstrate no version control and are not subject to any formal review procedures, meaning that many are out of date and ineffective", the ICO found.

There was also "no clear picture of what data is held by the DfE", and, as a result, no record of processing activity, a direct breach of article 30 of the GDPR. Without this it was "difficult for the DfE to fulfil their other obligations such as privacy information, retention and security arrangements".

Children's rights groups want the controversial sharing of NPD data with external organisations stopped.

Under its data-sharing process, the DfE releases anonymised sections of the NPD to organisations that request them. However, the ICO found the reasons for doing so were not always justified.

Instead there was an "over-reliance" on using "public task", which was "not always appropriate and supported by identified legislation".

"Legitimate interest" had also been used as a lawful basis in some applications, but there was "limited understanding of the requirements of legitimate interest and to assess the application and legalities of it prior to sharing taking place", the ICO warned.

About 12 of 400 applications were rejected due to an approach designed to find a legal gateway to "fit" the application rather than an assessment of the application against a set of robust measures to provide "assurance and accountability" that the sharing was lawful.

A DfE spokesperson said the department treated the handling of personal data "very seriously", and since the audit had taken "a number of steps to address the findings and recommendations, including a review of all processes for the use of personal data and significantly increasing the number of staff dedicated to the effective management of it".

A report by DefendDigitalMe called for urgent changes to the way the department collected and managed data. It suggested a "national data guardian" is set up to ensure independent oversight.

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Ministers 'miss chance' to end power of academy 'oligarchs'

JOHN DICKENS

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EXCLUSIVE

Ministers have "missed an opportunity" to end the stranglehold of academy "oligarchs" by ignoring warnings in a government-commissioned study.

A £220,000 "investigative" report commissioned by the Department for Education, published this week, found academy governance was at risk of being "too insular".

A lack of separation in roles was "common practice" with more than half of academy trust chairs also holding positions as members of the trust.

But the government's updated governance handbook published yesterday has failed to outlaw the practice.

Emma Knights, the chief executive of the National Governance Association, said it was a "missed opportunity" to end academy "oligarchs".

"Those holding multiple governance roles use the argument that it's needed for communication, but I suspect that really they don't want to relinquish that power."

Under the academy governance structure, the trust board is the trust's decision-making body and is accountable and responsible for the academy.

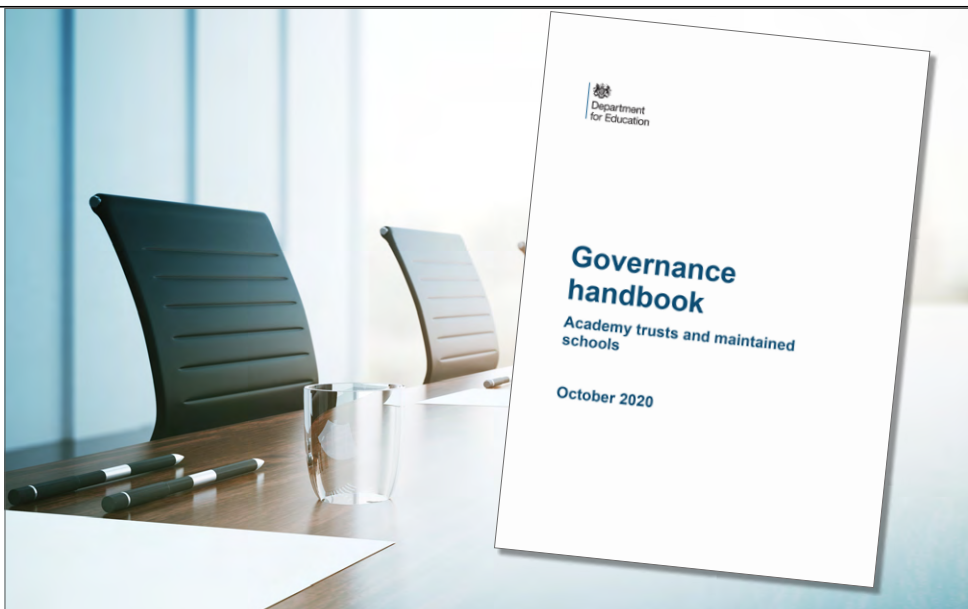
Meanwhile, the role of members is described as similar to shareholders in a private company. They are charged with safeguarding the academy trust's governance, but shouldn't get involved in the day-to-day business of the trust.

But the DfE's governance report, put together by researchers from the National Foundation for Educational Research, found that more than half of academy trust chairs are also a member of the trust.

Plus, about 20 per cent of academy trust trustees reported they were also members.

Researchers warned this "may impact their objectivity and ability to oversee trust governance impartially".

They said the "lack of separation" needed "effective monitoring and evaluation" by an



independent organisation, while observing other boards, "may help to ensure trust boards do not become too insular and are objectively challenged".

Knights said it was a "real problem. Having two clearly differentiated layers of responsibility and accountability is essential for effective governance and oversight: it is decidedly difficult to challenge yourself fully and objectively.

"Far too many trusts still do not yet have this important separation of power: the justification that is generally used is that having individuals in common helps communication. This isn't a good enough reason. It's perfectly possible to communicate well with people to whom you are reporting."

The governance handbook, updated this week for the first time in 18 months, provides further advice on the role of members.

It says they should "avoid overstepping their powers or undermining the boards' discretion in exercising its responsibilities".

"If members also sit on the board of trustees, this reduces the objectivity with which the members can exercise their powers and increases the risk of unchecked 'group think' by the board," it adds.

Where members are trustees, they should "have no greater power than other academy trustees and should remain conscious of the

corporate nature of the board's identify and decision-making and not seek to dominate the board".

But the department has again refused to go further than stating its "strong preference" is for at least a majority of members to be independent of the board of trustees.

However, a Schools Week investigation earlier this year found this wasn't the case for seven of the largest 52 academy trusts.

The handbook does state that new funding rules from March next year will require trusts to ensure that its members are not also employees.

A government investigation into the Academies Transformation Trust (ATT), published in 2017, illustrated the potential problems of people holding too many academy roles.

It showed that Stephen Tisley, the trust's then chair, had put Ian Cleland, the then chief executive, on temporary leave following finance concerns.

However Cleland used his powers as a founding member of ATT to sack Tisley and appoint a new chair alongside three new directors. Those trustees then reinstated Cleland.

Academies minister Baroness Berridge said she wants to see "members really discharging their role to its full extent, so they can be assured the trust board is governing effectively", adding new guidance provides additional clarity.

Report reveals how to stop edtech progress crashing

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

A dedicated Office for EdTech and Digital Skills should be established "at the heart of government" to drive "coherent national change", a new report has recommended.

The Edtech Advisory Forum, made up of school leaders and tech specialists, has released an interim report investigating the impact of Covid-19 on education and children's services.

The report, which has been submitted as evidence to the education select committee's inquiry into the impact of the virus on education, recommends the creation of a dedicated office to "drive forward coherent national change" and support a "UK-wide approach to digital skills".

It said edtech was "fragmented" across the government with the Department for International Trade (DIT), Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (DBEIS) and the Department for Education (DfE) all playing a part.

The group suggested that an office "with clear ministerial responsibility . . . would coordinate and improve the focus" across these departments.

While the forum was hesitant before any consultation to detail how the office would work, it is understood it could be similar to the Office for Artificial Intelligence, which is part of the DCMS and the DBEIS.

Tony Parkin, an education technologist, said anything that increased focus on the area "would be welcome". But he said the move could re-create a Becta-style organisation that would require an "arms-length body or quango" set-up.

The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency or Becta, previously promoted technology in schools.



Nick Gibb



But it was the first quango to be cut in 2010 under Michael Gove, then education secretary, and adviser Dominic Cummings in the so-called "bonfire of the quangos" that saved the government £80 million a year.

However, Ty Goddard, the chair of strategic body EdTechUK and a member of the forum, said: "We don't need another quango, we need a unit at the heart of government that's able to drive this agenda forward with focus."

He said the dedicated office would "bring many disparate strands of work together under key ministerial leadership" and "be more effective than the sum of its parts".

Covid-19 has changed the digital landscape as schools move to online lessons and platforms.

It has also forced politicians to open up the sector to edtech, particularly Nick Gibb, the schools minister, who has been resistant to such moves.

The DfE's edtech strategy was launched last year with backing of just

£10 million, a sum that some critics saw as paying lip service to embracing technology in schools.

The new report said the pace of change created an "urgent need" for another strategy.

It also called for an educator designed and led national platform for schools in England – such as Hwb in Wales and Glow in Scotland.

Cat Scutt, of the Chartered College of Teaching and a member of the government's current EdTech Leadership Group, said the recent focus on edtech had "changed people's views in both directions" and created a "more balanced perspective on tech" by showcasing its value and limitations.

But she said while schools might move to blended-learning approaches, the growth in the wider sector "will start to flatten out as things go back to normal, but with some tech enhancements".

A DfE spokesperson said it was "constantly working to help the sector harness" the potential of technology. Its current edtech strategy drove improvements in educational outcomes.



Cat Scutt

Investigation

Trust embroiled in £2m data system contract legal row amid move to cloud

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

England's largest academy trust is entangled in a High Court legal dispute with a major software supplier that lost out on a £2 million contract to move the trust to a cloud-based data system.

Bromcom Computers claims United Learning breached procurement law by awarding rival Arbor a five-year contract to provide its management information system (MIS), alleging the "outcome is not the result of a transparent and lawful evaluation process".

United Learning, which runs 75 academies, is "resolute" it has acted correctly, and has pledged to "vigorously defend the claim". However, experts say the trust could now face a legal bill running into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The dispute comes amid warnings of "seismic" change in the sector as a growing number of trusts seek to shift to a cloud-based MIS model. The government advises such moves will trigger a new procurement process (see box out).

Meanwhile, MIS suppliers are also competing to sweep up new business amid any fall-out from Capita selling off its dominant SIMs programme, currently used



by three-quarters of schools.

Richard Moore, partner at Clarke Willmott law firm, said it is "uncommon for a disappointed bidder to commence litigation" as procurement challenges are "very costly".

Given the size of the £2 million contract, Moore said if the case went to trial and was "heavily fought" it could set both parties back around £250,000 and possibly more.

"Most disappointed bidders decide that it's not worth their time and money," he added.

United Learning tendered for a supplier

to provide a cloud MIS at 60 of its schools, replacing the current system provided by Capita.

After submitting an initial tender in October last year, both Bromcom and Arbor were invited to submit final tenders in February – with the contract to be awarded to the "most economically advantageous tender".

However, Bromcom said the award to Arbor breached this, alleging favouritism as Arbor already supplied the MIS to 15 of

Continued on next page

Cloud-based MIS switch will 'normally require procurement'

Under guidance sent to all schools last year the Department for Education advised that upgrading to a cloud-based product "would normally be regarded as significant enough to require a competitive procurement".

Any contract that falls within

the EU procurement thresholds – above £189,000 – is required to be compliant with the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU).

Schools can take advantage of the DfE's G-Cloud service, which offers to simplify procurement in an OJEU-compliant way by providing a

list of suitable vendors.

However, when using the service, schools must pay the price listed within the framework. This has led to larger academy trusts attempting to secure a better deal without using the service.

Investigation

the trust's academies. United Learning said the allegations amounted to "subjective statements of opinion or conjecture" by Bromcom.

Other alleged breaches included that the trust had miscalculated fees related to Arbor's proposal and improperly added extra costs when calculating its own proposal.

United Learning's lawyers told *Schools Week* the trust is "extremely disappointed that – following a lengthy, transparent and robust procurement process – Bromcom Computers plc has chosen to pursue what the trust believes is an unjustified claim.

"The trust is resolute that it has acted correctly and will continue to vigorously defend the claim accordingly."

The legal action could be a sign of things to come as companies battle to win the huge share of the market owned by Capita SIMS, used by some 21,000 schools across the UK.

It has been reported the troubled outsourcing firm is looking to sell its education software solutions, which includes SIMs, for around £500 million.

Bromcom's most recent annual accounts state the announcement is "expected to remove the stagnation in the market".

The firm states that, despite the Capita stranglehold, it has secured a "significant increase" in cash generated from operations last year but plans to "build on this momentum created for speedy growth". Accounts show its trading profit after tax was £455,000 last year.



The firm is already working with major trusts including Ark, Harris Federation and the David Ross Education Trust.

Sara Marsh, head of customer relations at Bromcom, told *Schools Week* the firm "has not taken this action lightly" but believes "fair, transparent and equal treatment of bidders are essential for the healthy future of the sector as it is going through seismic change".

She said the MIS market has suffered from "procurement issues...and a dominant MIS supplier" over the past 20 years, and these issues "held back the market as well as schools".

Analysis from Bring More Data shows Capita SIMs was still used by 74.8 per cent of state-funded schools in England at the start of this year.

But churn in the sector is increasing. In 2012, Capita lost just 25 schools, representing 0.1 per cent churn, but last year this had risen to 609 schools (3.6 per cent).

Meanwhile, among academy trusts with 30 or more schools, SIMS market share has dropped from 48 per cent in autumn 2019,



to 39 per cent.

This seems to be as more of the larger trusts moved to cloud-based software, which stores data on servers external to schools and is accessible by authorised users from any location over the internet.

In contrast, the vast majority of SIMS requires schools to store data in physical servers on site.

Joshua Perry, of Edtech Experts, who runs the Bring More Data blog, said cloud services reduced the cost of maintenance on physical servers for schools. They also allowed for much easier access when working remotely – something that has come to the forefront during the fall-out of Covid-19 school closures, he added.

Perry predicted the increased churn will continue, although the pandemic could also put a halt to any changes this year as schools' priorities lie elsewhere.

But he added: "Whilst I wouldn't want to comment on any specific case, my advice to any EdTech company would be to be wary of entering into legal disputes with schools and MATs, because any commercial benefit may not be worth the reputational risk."

MIS firm has history of legal challenges

This is not the first time Bromcom has taken legal steps to challenge the tender process for a large MIS contract.

In 2013, Cambridgeshire County Council, which oversees more than 200 maintained schools and nurseries, proposed to make a direct award to Capita of a contract

of maintenance for its schools MIS.

The contract was worth £600,000 and covered three years.

Bromcom challenged the proposed direct award, and it was put up again in a competitive procurement process.

However, when the contract was again awarded to Capita, Bromcom

pursued legal action at the High Court claiming CCC "committed a manifest error of assessment" by simply picking its current supplier.

In 2017 the dispute was resolved with a consent order from the High Court which instructed CCC to initiate re-procurement and pay Bromcom £45,000.

Revealed: £96m laptop contracts went to Tory donor's firm

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

A firm handed almost £100 million worth of contracts to supply laptops to disadvantaged children without an open tender was founded by a Tory donor.

Computacenter Ltd was chosen by the Department for Education to deliver 230,000 laptops to vulnerable pupils after the Covid school lockdowns.

Private Eye revealed this week that the firm's founder, Sir Philip Hulme, who remains a non-executive director and shareholder, has previously donated thousands to the Conservative Party.

During the run-up to the general election in November last year, Hulme's wife, Janet Hulme, gave the party £100,000.

The government has been warned against using coronavirus as a "blank cheque" to avoid accountability after handing out £1 billion of state contracts without tender, with firms connected to the Conservatives scooping up millions.

The DfE also failed on its promise to deliver all the laptops to pupils by the end of June, falling nearly 30,000 short. The scheme was first announced in April.

Dr Mary Bousted, the National Education Union's joint general secretary, said contracts should be based on "capability and capacity, rather than cronyism".

"All these contracts must be awarded openly," she added. "It's public money and must be awarded to organisations that can deliver in the timescales required and to the scale that's required."

The DfE has handed Computacenter £96 million worth of contracts this year.

In April, it was awarded £60 million to provide 230,000 laptops to disadvantaged pupils with no access to equipment during the pandemic schools shutdown.

It received a further £6.3 million in June to supply 4G wireless routers to these children.

The scheme came under fire after it was revealed 540,000 were actually eligible for the equipment – more than double the



Sir Philip Hulme

allocated amount.

In August the DfE announced it would be providing an additional 150,000 free laptops to pupils who cannot attend school due to coronavirus, with Computacenter receiving a £27m contract to deliver this.

The firm declined to provide a comment when contacted by *Schools Week*. But it told *Private Eye* it is "very proud to have played a small role in this vital programme to support the educational needs of some of the most disadvantaged young people" during the pandemic.

Computacenter is a leading reseller of personal computers. It has a long history of delivering supply contracts across numerous government departments and is listed as an approved supplier within the Crown Commercial Service Framework.

The DfE did not respond to a request for comment. But it's likely the firm's place on the crown framework was influential in it winning the contract, as it had already been through a competitive tendering process.

Edenred, the firm handed a contract worth up to £234 million to provide free school meal vouchers for the government, was also a crown supplier.

The government does not have to follow

the usual tender rules because of the urgent need for services to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

But this has led to criticism as companies linked to the Conservative Party have won contracts totalling millions.

One of those firms under scrutiny is Public First, a lobbying company founded by James Frayne and Rachel Wolf, who are both allies of Michael Gove and Dominic Cummings.

The firm has been given contracts of more than £1 million, that have not been tendered for, since the start of the pandemic. That includes £46,000 to provide "urgent communications support" to the embattled Ofqual following this year's exams fiasco. Hulme set up Computacenter in 1981 and worked there full-time before stepping down as executive chairman in 2001.

He was knighted for his services to charity and technology in 2016.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "This contract was awarded based on the need for children and young people to receive the support they required as soon as possible. To suggest anything else is fundamentally untrue."

Speed read



School visits: what Ofsted found

Ofsted has published the first findings from its “visits” to 121 schools that volunteered to be part of a September pilot. Here’s what inspectors found...

1 Covid “anxiety” leads to rise in home education ...

More than a third of schools reported that some parents had removed their children to home educate them, or were about to do so, because of “their anxiety over Covid-19”.



Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, said that while for some this would have been a “positive choice, after enjoying their summer experience at home, many leaders believed parents were concerned about the safety of their children. We will watch this trend as our visits continue over the autumn.”

2... and the chief inspector reckons “fake news” is behind it

Spielman seemed to attribute the rise to the spread of “fake news”. But she said that “rebutting these myths, which spread so easily, is hard”.



However, a “consolidation and simplification of government advice for schools would help bring clarity for teachers and parents alike as we head towards the winter”.

On government guidance, Ofsted also found leaders had struggled to keep up with the number of official updates throughout the pandemic. *Schools Week* analysis previously revealed school leaders received almost 100 government updates between mid-February and the start of June.

3 Remote learning “not aligned” to curriculum

Ofsted explained how leaders reported that in some subjects remote education was only aligned with their pre-existing curriculum “to some extent”. In others, it was not yet aligned.



While Ofsted said schools were using remote learning to educate pupils at home, the materials “were in many cases not fully aligned with the regular curriculum”.

Spielman said if children were at home for up to a fortnight at a time, they “lose the progression that a strong, well-sequenced curriculum brings. Without that structure, remote education becomes more about filling time than about effective learning.”

Remote learning would be explored in more detail “during this term”.

4 Testing failures “real barrier” to keeping schools open

School leaders were concerned about not being able to keep their schools open when staff were forced to self-isolate to wait for coronavirus tests and test results.



“Many leaders saw the lack of availability of Covid-19 testing in their area as a real barrier to getting – or staying – properly up and running again,” the report said.

“Leaders of some small schools described how quickly their school might have to close if staff could not get tested when they needed to, though this fear was shared by schools of all sizes.”

The government’s testing system went into meltdown in September after failing to cope with a rise in requests for tests as schools went back.

5 Primaries focus on reading, secondaries reorder curriculum

Ofsted said secondaries were “teaching most of the subjects they usually teach, though many have reordered topics within subjects. However, some had suggested that pupils may need to drop an option.”



If the curriculum was reordered, it was to focus on “the most important building blocks for each subject. Others said they were prioritising what they thought could not be taught effectively through remote learning.”

Meanwhile, primaries were giving “even more attention to reading than usual”, including phonics, as they “wanted to make sure that if there have been any losses in learning, particularly in reading, these are quickly put right”.

Schools said they planned to return to their normal curriculum by the summer term next year, but many said they thought they would “be able to achieve this earlier”.

6 Pupils are struggling to concentrate

Pupils were adapting to schools’ Covid rules, but some were “finding it more difficult to concentrate on their learning than usual”.



“Leaders felt that some were showing less resilience – for example becoming quickly upset if the work seemed difficult, or giving up more easily,” Ofsted said.

Other concerns were shortened concentration spans and deteriorating physical health, and pupils becoming more subdued.

PM considering tutors for 'exceptional' kids

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

The prime minister has this week signalled one-to-one teaching for pupils of "exceptional ability".

While No 10 has refused to provide any further details, the potential policy shift could point to a wider role for the national tutoring programme beyond coronavirus catch-up.

During his speech to the Conservatives' virtual conference on Tuesday, Boris Johnson said: "I want to take further an idea that we have tried in the pandemic and explore the value of one-to-one teaching, both for pupils who are in danger of falling behind, and for those who are of exceptional abilities."

"We can all see the difficulties, but I believe such intensive teaching could be transformational and of massive reassurance to parents."

The government's £350 million national tutoring programme (NTP) will help schools provide subsidised access to tutoring for pupils who have fallen behind following the pandemic and ensuing school closures.

One option could be that the NTP is extended beyond its current remit to also cater for high achievers.

But there may not be the appetite among the programme's current leadership.

Sir Peter Lampl, the chair and founder of the Sutton Trust, which is one of the charities overseeing the NTP, said any additional tutoring support "should be directed at pupils from lower-income homes."

"Many middle-class families already buy-in tutoring for their children, so it is absolutely right that we are able to offer similar support to lower-income pupils too."

That doesn't appear to be No 10's thinking.

Dominic Cummings, Johnson's chief adviser, is known to have a particular interest in the country's brightest pupils.

He was behind the introduction of university-sponsored, selective maths free schools during his stint as adviser to Michael Gove.

The first – King's College London Mathematics School – opened in 2014. Another key cog behind the school's establishment was Alison Wolf, currently taking a sabbatical from her academic



position at the university to advise Johnson on FE policy.

No 10 would not be drawn on further details about how it could choose which pupils, and crucially how many, have "exceptional ability".

Cummings has been reported as saying back in 2013 that it's possible to educate "the most able and interested pupils to an extremely high level" through selective maths schools, adding "we should give this ~2 per cent a specialist education".

No 10 is also thought to be particularly interested in the *Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth* (SMPY), a longitudinal study tracking 5,000 of the smartest children in America. One of its main takeaways was that gifted children still need help from teachers to reach their full potential.

However, the study, which began in 1971, focused more on pupils in the top 1 per cent (based on a reasoning test taken before the age of 13).

It's also likely that the scale of any future scheme would be dependent on the amount

of funding that could be secured in the delayed comprehensive spending review.

A Sutton Trust report in 2018, *Potential for Success, Fulfilling the promise of highly able students in secondary schools*, looked at the 10 per cent of highest attaining pupils.

Its analysis showed that the typical comprehensive secondary had just 11 high attainers per year.

But the report also warned that identifying students who had potential for high attainment was "extremely challenging". This was particularly so for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who were "both more likely to be missed when identifying the highly able, and are more likely to fall behind and struggle to fulfil their potential".

However, one area that does seem to have broad agreement is that small group tutoring can help. The Sutton Trust report said such programmes are "likely to benefit the highly able", but said more research is needed.

In 2017, Justine Greening, then education secretary, pledged under her new social mobility plan to trial teaching approaches to support the teaching of the brightest children from the least well-off communities.

But the £18 million Future Talent Fund was cancelled a year later.

Jonathan Simons, a former Downing St policy adviser and now director at Public First, said: "There's good evidence that one-to-one teaching can work to support pupils, both those who need extra support but also those who need stretch. It's important we don't forget the latter."



See selective maths schools feature, page 22

Oak's online lessons will 'never be sold'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The Oak National Academy has pledged it will “never sell its lessons” after the government confirmed that its charity owners will retain the intellectual property, despite large public investment in the platform.

Launched in April using content voluntarily contributed by teachers and schools, Oak quickly became a household name during the national lockdown, delivering millions of lessons in its first week.

But the announcement earlier this year that the Department for Education would pump an additional £4.3 million into the platform, on top of its initial £300,000 in funding, prompted questions about who would own its content and brand.

In response to a recent freedom of information request, the DfE said the rights to the brand, website and content produced this year would belong to the Reach Foundation and its curriculum partners.

However, the grant funding agreement “includes a condition requiring that any user will have the right to access all online materials free of charge during the academic year 2020-21”.

The DfE confirmed to Schools Week this week that Reach and its partners would continue to own the intellectual property after 2020-21.

Ed Vainker, chief executive of the Reach Foundation, told Schools Week that Oak had “committed that it will never sell these lessons”, so they can “remain a national resource”.

He also said that as Oak's curriculum was made up of “lessons from existing schools and teachers”, it “therefore doesn't own the majority of the intellectual property it uses”.

“It is owned by schools who led the creation of lessons and other third parties (e.g. publishers who own rights to Roald Dahl) whose resources are included within them. They've generously agreed to share it, via Oak, to support teachers.”

He added that the academy was a “national shared resource with a clear aim to support teachers”, and was “housed within a charity and so can't make a profit nor be sold for profit”.

The pledge comes as private equity experts said Oak could become a very valuable platform if it



moved into the commercial realm.

By not holding on to the IP, the government may have missed out on a potential windfall for the taxpayer.

On a potential value for the platform, Derrick Betts, an associate partner at EY-Parthenon specialising in the education sector, said: “It's

just speculative, and we don't really know how big it could become, but there's evidence of other digital content platforms that point towards valuations in the low hundreds of millions.”

Asked in a recent freedom of information request to clarify whether its grant agreement with Reach would allow for any of Oak's assets, licences or intellectual property to be sold to a third party, the DfE said there was “no intention of this within the scope of the grant”.

The grant's terms and conditions also contain provisions to enable recovery of monies in the event of any breach, the DfE added.

Speculation about the future of the platform was also fanned earlier this year by an admission that it may begin to gather “basic data” on its users.

Ian Bauckham, the academy's chair, told a Westminster Education Forum event in June that there had been a “huge level of interest in the data that we could collect”, and said the site may “move into the realm of voluntary or optional log-ins” in future.

Leon Hady, a former headteacher who recently obtained private equity funding to provide online teacher training courses around the world, said it was the potential to collect more data on users that could make Oak a “very valuable asset”.

“The user data and trackability of those people would be huge to some companies,” he said, adding that it wasn't unusual for education platforms to fetch “25 to 50” times their original investment value.

It is understood any data collection by Oak is only being used to improve the product.

It's not unheard of for charities to sell elements of their operations to commercial providers and then use the money to advance their own charitable aims.

When Edexcel was partially sold to Pearson in 2003, the proceeds were used by its trustees to set up The Edge Foundation.

And when private equity firm Montagu acquired the College of Law in 2017, the £200 million made was used for a legal education charitable fund.

F1 in Schools zoom to success with innovative 2020 UK National Finals event

For the first time in the 20-year history of F1 in Schools National Finals events, teams vying to become National Champions were unable to compete together at a live event. F1 in Schools however, were determined not to shatter the dreams of so many students and created an exciting livestreamed finals to meet the demands of the new environment we are all living in. With the 34 teams racing live and over 5000 students watching online Britannia Red from Robert May's School, Odiham, Hampshire, took the 2020 F1 in Schools National Champions crown in a thrilling climax to this year's competition.

In March 2020 this leading global STEM challenge, had completed its 12 UK Regional Finals and was set for an April UK F1 in Schools National Finals live event with 34 teams competing for the coveted UK Champions title and university scholarships. As with so many events, the finals had to be postponed, with lockdown, school closures and social distancing three major challenges to making it happen at all this year.

F1 in Schools were committed to ensuring that the students could see the fruition of their hard work, but had to take a different approach to replace their annual 2-day live event. An innovative hybrid event was created, combining live racing with video presentations, written submissions and distanced car scrutineering, all assessed remotely by a panel of expert judges.

The highly professional livestreamed event was hosted by Tom Deacon, from Formula 1's Esports series, with Georgina Edwards, an alumni of the competition as pundit, and Sophie Harker, an aerodynamics and performance engineer at BAE Systems and winner of the IET's Young Women Engineer of the Year Award 2018, providing expert car analysis.



The trio of presenters presided over the racing, ensuring all the teams could watch the performance of their cars on the F1 in Schools race track. The track action was accompanied by video conference team interviews and messages of support from F1 drivers. Lenovo UK provided the technical infrastructure to enable the event which culminated in a livestreamed awards presentation with the hosts announcing category winners and the top three podium winners.

Andrew Denford, Founder and Chairman, F1 in Schools, said of this F1 in Schools UK 2020 competition, "It's been a roller coaster of a year for all the teams. They wanted to complete their journey and compete nationally, with many having spent quite a few years participating and desperately wanting to win a place in the World Finals, so we wanted to make it happen. Today's event was a very accomplished 'plan B' and although the teams couldn't all be together, they were able to compete and share in the excitement of the competition.

"I congratulate all the teams for their perseverance and resilience. Today has proved that they can overcome the challenges that they are faced with and succeed. I'm sure all

the students have bright futures ahead of them, I know they will all have learnt so many skills from F1 in Schools that will benefit them in their careers ahead."

Britannia Red, celebrated their victory with confetti, albeit on their own at school and not on the top step of the podium with all the teams celebrating. They will receive the impressive National Champions trophy, a visit to a future FORMULA 1 BRITISH GRAND PRIX courtesy of Silverstone with an F1 team garage tour and exclusive behind the scenes paddock tour courtesy of Formula 1, as well as winning an F1 team factory tour and valuable UCL Mechanical Engineering bursaries.

The F1 in Schools National Finals 2020 took place with the support of Formula 1, Denford, the IET, Lenovo, Autodesk, the Project Management Institute Educational Foundation, UCL Engineering, FIA Women in Motorsport Schools Week and FE Week.

**For further information
about F1 in Schools visit
www.F1inSchools.co.uk**

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

How many more tragedies will it take?

Schools Week first raised the problems of many schools having no sprinklers fitted back in 2017 on our front page (see image). It followed the Grenfell tragedy, where 72 people died following a fire in the 24-storey tower block in west London.

In 2018, we reported on renewed calls to make sprinklers mandatory as just one of 47 London schools involved in fires that year had sprinklers fitted.

In 2019, we again flagged concerns after our investigation found just three per cent of schools that had fires in the past five years had sprinklers fitted.

Later that year, following a huge blaze at student accommodation in Bolton, education unions also picked this up – pleading with education secretary Gavin Williamson to make sprinkler systems mandatory, and to look at retrofitting them to current education buildings.

“The fire in Bolton was far too close a call. It must mark a turning point,” the unions said.

The government, at that time, had launched a call for evidence to update its school building fire safety guidance. The Department for Education promised to respond, and launch a full consultation, by the end of 2019.

But it failed to meet the deadline. And, ten months on, we are still waiting.

Meanwhile, as we report this week, another two

schools – both in Derbyshire and without sprinklers – were devastated by a blaze. More than 1,000 pupils without a school, being educated from home. Thank goodness the pupils weren't in school at the time.

But how many more tragedies will it take before the government acts?

Ministers must step in and get a hold of this. They need to publish the promised consultation without further delay, so the rules can be improved.

As the Derbyshire fire chief who oversaw the brigade's response to the devastated fire this week said: “A school is right in the heart of a community, providing our children with the education they need, so to see this taken away, at a time when schools are just starting to recover following Covid lockdown restrictions, is both a huge shock and totally unacceptable when there are fire safety measures that can prevent such devastation.”



SCHOOLS WEEK

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Ofsted visits find schools' remote learning 'not aligned'

... **Mark Mackley**

Schools are doing what they can. The question has to be asked why schools are being asked to try and do "business as normal" when other services aren't? GP surgeries are not working in a normal way, for example.

My staff are working incredibly hard to try and provide something at least meaningful and aligned where possible to the curriculum. This is a massive challenge for schools and we need help and support, not directives and judgments.

Money for platforms such as Teams/Google and for laptops etc is welcome but it is not the solution. Practical support (not a DfE webinar which shows a school with all the bells and whistles) on how to move forwards is what we need.

Revealed: the gaps in teachers' pensions worth thousands

... **Dominic Wall**

This problem is real and widespread. We remind all our staff each year to check their personal records online, as corrections can take many months to be made. The good news is that local authorities are well aware of the issue and usually have a designated person in their HR team who will respond to the enquiry – some even have a dedicated email address for these enquiries! Once you have set up a personal TPS account it is easy to keep track of; historically it was a black box, hence the fact that many gaps go back decades.

... **Andy Starkie**

It's undoubtedly more complicated if you change schools, but the TPS records are often wrong even in relatively straightforward situations. I have been teaching at the same primary school in Brighton since 1995, and switched from full-time to 0.6 in 2001. On at least a dozen times my record has been incorrect – big errors have occurred when Brighton and Hove City Council LA separated from East Sussex, when my school became an all-through primary, when the pension scheme changed to career average, when extra supply days were counted separately, when payroll systems

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Matt Hood

Grammar schools can and do tackle social mobility

Let's put aside the questionable claim that the expansion fund worked in *this* school. It (unsurprisingly) didn't work as a policy as a whole – that's what matters. Having or expanding grammars doesn't work. Please can we not "re-open this debate" – it's a total distraction.



THE REPLY OF THE WEEK WINS A MUG. CONTACT US AT NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK TO CLAIM

changed at BHCC, and numerous other times when both the LA and the TPS have admitted they uploaded the data incorrectly. Occasionally the data is wrong in my favour, such as being credited with working 57 days in February 2019! (I pointed this out to BHCC.) I would urge all teachers to register online with TPS and to check their records very carefully – you've earned your pension!

Campaign calls for BAME author quota in GCSE study lists

... **Julie Hughes**

This is a little unfair on Pearson. Edexcel responded promptly and carefully and launched a range of more diverse texts and a very well received anthology of poetry back in 2018 for first assessment next year. They already meet the 25 per cent target of BAME authors on their GCSE English literature spec and are continuing to support teachers with diversifying their curriculum with free support materials, training events and webinars. During lockdown, Edexcel ran a very successful series of weekly support webinars for teachers, one of which specifically addressed diversity in the curriculum and explained in detail the constraints that face exam boards in their choice of material. As a teacher I was not alone in finding that particular webinar inspirational in terms of how imaginatively some schools have approached the diversification of their English curriculum.



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Feature

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERG.J



“The idea is totally solid. It just really works”

Jess Staufenberg visits one of the three specialist maths schools - although more are in the pipeline

Exeter College looms as you step out of the station. The award-winning, multi-storey, Ofsted ‘outstanding’ college is where Boris Johnson made his speech last week about boosting further education. Uphill towards the city centre is its glass-fronted maths and science centre.

But I’m not here to visit the college or its appealing centre. I’m here for Exeter Maths School, a free school for the same 16-18 age group the college attracts, except only for pupils with grade 8s in maths, physics or computer science, and grade 6 in English at GCSE. The core concept

of maths schools is sponsorship by a top-level university, and Exeter school has the city’s Russell Group institution on board. But I bet you didn’t guess that Exeter College is the other key partner.

My walk raises the question often asked of “maths schools” since they were announced by the coalition government almost a decade ago. Are they necessary? There’s an excellent college in Exeter and schools with sixth forms are dotted around the city. The maths school has only 60 pupils in a year, and, like all of its type, gets £350,000 a year on top of per pupil funding, just

to remain financially viable. They aren’t intended to join multi-academy trusts to reduce overheads or to grow pupil numbers. At such a small scale and high cost – and when other 16-19 provision is underfunded – are they proving their impact?

And who wants them? They may have been announced in 2011, but it was another three years before Exeter and King’s Maths School, sponsored by King’s College London, opened their doors. The government issued a simultaneous plea-cum-guilt-trip to higher education institutions: “Maths is at the heart of improving our society and economy. This country



has some brilliant university maths departments and world-famous mathematicians, but they have become disconnected from schools, school curriculums and exams."

It failed to persuade. By 2018, no more had opened and the University of Nottingham tartly pointed out the "huge commitment" needed. Oxford, Warwick, Bath and UCL also drew up their gates. Yet Exeter and King's schools were oversubscribed and had 'outstanding' Ofsted judgments.

A third opened this September: the University of Liverpool Maths School under principal Damian Haigh, with Baroness Berridge, the academies minister, confirming that others are in the pre-opening stage.

In 2022, the University of Lancaster Maths School should open for the northwest, the Surrey Maths School for the southeast and Durham Maths School for the northeast. In 2023, the Cambridge Maths School is planned for the east of England, and the Imperial College London Maths School could "potentially" open in the same year, according to the university's website.

There are a variety of sponsorship models. Colleges are on the board at Imperial and Lancaster, academy trusts at Surrey and Cambridge. That adds up to eight maths schools, with two in the capital, leaving three of England's nine regions bereft - Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands and East Midlands. Chancellor Rishi Sunak has pledged £7 million for 11 maths schools, and the DfE says it plans for nine to open by 2023.

Why is the government so set on this? In 2010,

the Nuffield Foundation warned that in England fewer than one in five pupils studied maths after the age of 16, whereas it was more than half in 18 of 24 developed countries. In eight of them every pupil studied maths until the end of school. "The UK is out on a limb," said the foundation's report. Baroness Alison Wolf, then a government adviser, was inspired by a specialist

"Pupils have a mini university-style experience"

maths college set up by mathematician Andrey Komologorov in Moscow, and the concept stuck.

So with two six-year-old maths schools, do we now have proof of concept? Kerry Burnham, the head of Exeter, tells me the three key arguments behind the rationale for such tiny provision.

First, the pupils don't just sit four A-levels in maths-related subjects, she says. They go beyond A-level content in a "mini university-style experience". Pupils in year 13 can choose a six-module "enrichment course" in everything from the nature of light to computer-aided maths, listening to lectures and solving a problem to gain the "Exeter maths certificate". A similar course runs at King's.

Liverpool's Haigh describes this kind of provision as "total immersion". "If you go to a sixth form, you will undoubtedly get a good



The sign greeting pupils in reception



The school used to be a surgeon's home

education in these same subjects. But here you are immersed in maths all the time. It's like instead of just learning French in lessons, you've actually moved to France." It's a compelling vision.

Does this take pupils beyond what they would otherwise have achieved? These are, after all, very able young people. In fact, progress scores at both schools are well above average, at 0.93 for King's and 0.79 for Exeter. In 2017, inspectors said of Burnham's school that "learners secure A-level

grades well above those expected, given their prior achievement", a comment echoed in the King's report the same year.

Meanwhile, both reports say the proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds is "high". Dan Abramson, King's principal, says about 50 per cent of pupils meet one of the school's disadvantage criteria and 11 per cent are eligible for free school meals. For an able pupil who has perhaps not been stretched before, it appears they access a unique kind of education. As Burnham says, "this is for the kid that's been stuck explaining maths to everyone else".

The second argument is around outreach - a condition of funding. The list is impressive: Exeter runs a computer science hub for primary schools, a "maths student community" for year 8s and a fortnightly GCSE enhancement course. It also took on 20 maths graduate teacher internships last year and ran specialist training for about 70 staff teaching maths or physics without a degree in the subjects. King's has a two-year intervention called GCSE Plus to encourage pupils into A-level study, and an Easter programme, 7 Plus, to move GCSE students to higher grades. The activities seem not to be self-serving either - only a quarter of those on outreach programmes apply to the school for A-level, Abramson says.

Which brings us to the third point. Are maths schools, as was feared, stealing top pupils from other local provision? Exeter and King's started with 30 pupils per year - and although they won't expand further, they have roughly doubled. But John Laramy, the principal of Exeter College, says an astonishing thing. "As the maths school has been created, our maths numbers have gone up." The schools lend maths greater status, he contends. Plus, he adds, "with this model, we have a university, FE college and school working together. It's what should be happening in every town and city in the country."

Of course, it's not certain the two maths schools are responsible for local rises in the uptake of maths. Analysis by FFT Education Datalab shows a 2.3 per cent increase nationally in entries to maths A-level last year, compared with a 6.7 per



Dan Abramson, headteacher, King's College London Mathematics School



The outdoor space at Exeter Maths School

cent drop in all A-level entries since 2016. Other initiatives have launched too: maths hubs, the advanced maths premium, grant funding for "centres for excellence" and a general shift from arts towards maths and science. It's definitely too soon to say maths schools made the difference.

"Here you are immersed in maths all the time"

And one stat has not improved. Entries to further maths, the subject most top universities want for a maths degree, have fallen 1.8 per cent since 2016, with girls particularly poorly represented. Can maths schools be the answer for driving higher numbers into this intimidating A-level?

We don't know yet, because detailed data has not been thoroughly collected. Ofsted's report for King's says that to improve, leaders should "track learners' progress into university and into the highest echelons of commerce and academia". It sounds a good recommendation for the government itself.

In a sense the question is not whether they should exist, but why their approach to maths



teaching is confined to these schools. Why not always teach for depth and understanding? And why not run similar models for struggling modern foreign languages? And, while we're at it, why not fund all FE provision at this level? Clearly when you do, class sizes stay small and enrichment is off the scale.

Abramson rounds up his advice for the maths schools about to open. "What I wish I'd known then, that I know now, is the idea at the core of maths schools is totally solid. It just really works."

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



JAMES KIBBLE

Deputy CEO,
Xavier Catholic Education Trust

Prioritising wellbeing doesn't make you a 'snowflake'

Amid daily guidelines and Daily Mail headlines, we can't lose sight of what it takes to run happy and successful schools, writes James Kibble

While we pride ourselves on taking a sensible approach to change and regulation in education, the current pandemic has inevitably led to some additional pressures for staff that we haven't been able to wholly protect them from. Implementing additional systems for infection control and making provision for online learning are just two examples of changes that have had a significant impact.

In an effort to compensate for this, when planning for a trust-wide Inset day last week, we asked headteachers to think about how they might take a flexible approach in order to maximise staff well-being.

Some heads decided to continue with traditional face-to-face training because this is what the majority of their staff wanted to do; others chose to provide online training opportunities that staff could complete in their own time at home; and some put on additional twilight sessions across the term to give them extra flexibility in how to use the day. This is not unusual.

This last approach went down really well with leaders and staff, including one teacher who was given the day to herself as she had completed her training modules in advance. She was so appreciative that she took to Twitter to extol the virtues of working with a headteacher who took staff well-being so seriously, writing: "Today

“Sadly, the “lazy teachers” narrative always plays well

was supposed to be an Inset day for all staff but given the current circumstances, our head has given everyone the day off... This is what great well-being looks like.”

The tweet received more than 5,000 likes. It was a story that was shared in the genuine spirit of wanting to highlight good practice.

Unfortunately, some in the national press took a different view. The headline in an article published this week read “School head gives staff day off FOUR WEEKS into new term” – the capital letters are theirs. The article went on to deride the school for what someone from the Campaign for Real Education called a “terrible decision”, citing that unfortunately all-too-familiar charge

that this was in spite of the fact that teachers had been off for six months during the past academic year.

Certain elements of the mainstream media, in particular their online publications, will always

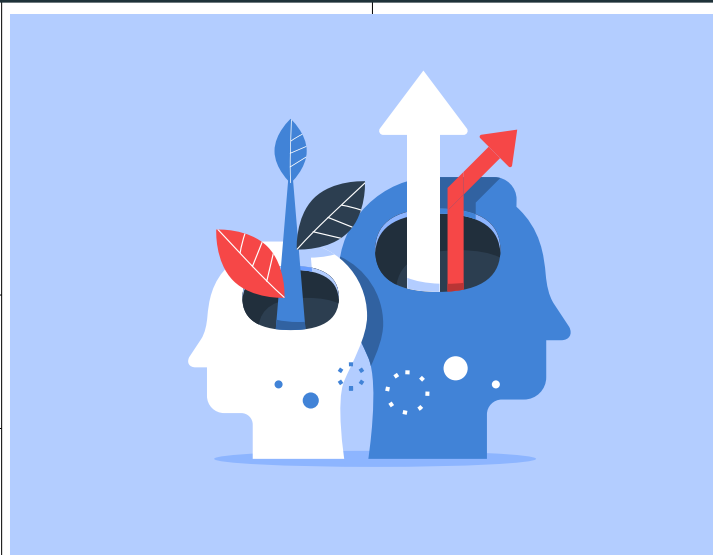
be on the lookout for controversy in order to generate hits. We need to be realistic about the fact that schools are often easy targets for this. Sadly, the “lazy teachers” narrative always plays well. However, we in education, and particularly those in positions of leadership, should not be deterred from prioritising staff well-being.

There are distinct differences between schools that take staff well-being seriously and those that would rightly be deemed “cosy”. The cosy school is frightened to challenge staff to work hard for the good of the children. It looks for ways to keep staff happy at all costs. Needless to say, this leads to nothing but disaster. On the contrary, there is nothing soft about promoting staff well-

being. In fact, it makes sense even when viewed cynically as a purely utilitarian strategy, aimed at getting the best out of staff for no other reason than to do the best by the children – though one would hope it came from a more genuine place than that!

Either way, decent schools know that if they are to offer their children the very best in terms of education, they need to look after their workforce. Heads who go out of their way to make this happen, and particularly those who are willing to take a risk and do things differently, should be applauded, not lambasted. The same is true for those staff who share these good news stories.

Every one of us working in education has a responsibility to promote the profession and to combat misinformation and disingenuity where we find it. We will always have our detractors, but we know that the job we do plays a vital part in the long-term happiness, success and prosperity of the next generation, so let's not put up with anyone telling us that we're not working hard enough!



Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK

More agile CPD is key to ensuring Covid's legacy doesn't become an injustice for the profession, writes Nicola Podd

easing children back into school life. Assessing and tackling the impact of lockdown on learning and on students' emotional and mental health. All while adapting practices and policies to ensure schools are safe and Covid-secure. Re-adjusting to formal education is a challenge for everyone, and it is imperative that learners aren't the only ones who are supported through it.

Teachers and school leaders carry high levels of responsibility in ensuring learners leave education with the best possible outcomes, and they are doing it in a time of change and uncertainty, even with regard to how these outcomes will be determined. How to meet this volatility is a key concern, as it is likely to affect staff's own wellbeing and effectiveness.

That's why the best schools and organisations have maintained their focus on continued professional development (CPD). Because not only does it drive up standards and performance, but it is a cornerstone for managing organisational change. A commitment to lifelong learning for all sends a strong signal to staff that their school's investment in them is equally prized as their learners' good GCSE results.

In spite of some of the media coverage, teachers have worked throughout this pandemic. They have had to adapt quickly and with little support to whole new teaching practices, for remote teaching and learning, for mixed and ever-changing groups of vulnerable and key worker children, for Covid-secure schools



NICOLA
PODD

Director of programmes,
Driver Youth Trust

CPD is key to getting through Covid crisis

and, increasingly, for blended learning models as children and whole bubbles self-isolate. It is nothing short of heroic, but to say they have done so tirelessly is as dangerous as downplaying their role.

and leaders.

The idea of taking time out of the hectic new school day, with its onerous new routines and increased demand to cover absent colleagues, may be unthinkable for some.

“The pandemic has only served to enrich CPD

Right now, many teachers could benefit greatly from a change in perspective, which training can provide. The opportunity to invest in their own learning and to step away from the classroom – be it for an hour's webinar or a day's training – has the potential to reenergise teachers

Furthermore, in many regions travel and technology remain the obstacles they always were to accessing such support. It's therefore essential that professional development adapts too.

The first thing to note is that CPD can be as formal or informal as you like. The importance is the



opportunity to reflect collectively in a low-stakes environment. Try shorter, in-school sessions scheduled at the end of the day with those in your bubble – supported by a subject expert your own sourced materials.

Next, online learning isn't just for pupils. Webinars are extremely inclusive and accessible and allow professionals from different schools and organisations to come together to share knowledge and experiences.

There is also a range of platforms on which online teaching communities have formed, offering remote mentoring, peer support and shared resources.

Finally, free resources have come a long way since the age of the quick-fix lesson plan or handout. There are endless free resources for teachers and TAs to guide their reflection on their teaching practice and to support them to make long-lasting adjustments.

Traditional face-to-face events still have many benefits that are difficult to emulate. They tend to facilitate more teamwork, practical exercises and discussions and better lend themselves to breakout sessions. But while some schools will have the space to enable some face-to-face training to continue, it just won't be possible for many. The advent of more agile CPD is key to ensuring Covid's legacy doesn't become a wholesale injustice for the profession.

In fact, the pandemic has only served to enrich CPD provision, giving immediate and unlimited access to expertise and knowledge to support teachers. A rich new variety of opportunities could keep the profession nimble through this uncharted territory.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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PETE
BLOOMFIELD

Headteacher, Great Yarmouth
Primary Academy

Vulnerable students need more than a quick-fix catch-up

With the National Tutoring Programme about to get under way, one primary leader says schools need to use catch-up funding more creatively to address the needs of the most vulnerable

This is Operation Encompass. We are calling to inform you of an incident..."

I received a lot of calls like this during lockdown. Operation Encompass's aim is to directly connect the police with schools to coordinate support for children living with domestic abuse. Nationally, there was a 49 per cent increase in calls to abuse helplines during that period. Here, it was much higher.

But domestic abuse is not the whole story. Since lockdown, I have walked to houses to collect children and bring them to school because they can't bear to leave home. They've spent more time with their parents over the past six months than they ever have before, and some children don't want to leave that. Others don't want their parents to be home alone without them there to help.

Great Yarmouth Primary is a school in a white working-class town on the Norfolk coast. It

serves one of the most deprived communities in the country, but the immense challenges we face are shared nationally.

Our school was graded 'inadequate' in November 2018. (It no longer is, but I'm resigned to the fact I may be waiting a while for Ofsted to come in and confirm that.) When I took the job

as principal in January 2019, the school was permanently excluding too many children and those in school were not learning enough. Had our pupils been able to take tests last year, we would have seen significant improvement in outcomes. Importantly, we did that without permanently excluding any children.

But what I see better than ever is that this is not something we should hold high as an achievement. It is the least we should be able to deliver.

The impact of Covid goes well beyond expected SATs outcomes. "Filling the gaps" in academic attainment matters, but schools like Great Yarmouth Primary need



to consider their spending way beyond tutors and quick-fix catch-up materials. We must use our resources to make ourselves more inclusive, especially of the most vulnerable. School must become

“School must become an oasis for vulnerable families

an oasis for these families. In fact, without addressing their needs first, the gap will only grow wider and catch-up will only get harder.

In practice, I have appointed an inclusion team to work with the most vulnerable, to be on gates, to speak to parents and families every day and to signpost additional support so that no family slips through the net.

And everyone has worked incredibly hard to make remote learning possible, with an accessible online curriculum that mirrors curriculum in school. But there's no point being accessible if you can't be accessed. Over half of our families have no suitable device at home on which to work, so we have had to

buy them the resources.

With a focus on "aspirations and resilience", we have made PSHE front and centre of our curriculum, rather than the "must-do" afterthought it too often is. This is as beneficial for the adults as it is for the children.

Finally and crucially, we have overstaffed, with three teachers per year group in a two-form entry school, and we have invested in our teachers' professional development. Everyone has been on inclusive leadership training.

All schools should be proud of the work they have done in the face of Covid. The legacy of that effort must be that schools that work with the most vulnerable are given the opportunity to invest in ways that best serve their communities, rather than to be led by funding priorities that ignore their contexts. We can no longer accept that some of our students will be left to languish in a society bereft of opportunities to improve their circumstance.

For our part, we're already receiving far fewer calls, and that's a first massive step towards "filling the gaps".

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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The heart attack didn't cause me to give up leadership, writes Robert Campbell. Losing heart did

I never intended to go early. I was always going to be the one who kept on keeping on. When I used to wind up my partner, Sarah – who is nine years younger than me – by saying she would retire before me, I was only half-joking.

I was the career-educationalist who served as the headteacher of four schools in total (two substantive, two interim) and who participated willingly and enthusiastically in the education system in manifold ways: NLE, NAHT National Executive, Headteachers' Roundtable, inaugural CEO of an academy trust, special free school establisher. I loved my work but, aged 54, I have decided enough is enough.

Today, I am a part-time teaching associate for a local university, a house-husband and an aspirant poet/musician, but at 37 I became a headteacher for the first time – willing, yet woefully under-prepared by my NPQH. I survived that first headship. Looking back, I'm sure I'm not alone in questioning the value of this hazing we put new heads through.

In 2007, I became principal of Impington Village College, a fulfilling job at a great, inclusive, comprehensive school with a unique character (International Baccalaureate, Enhanced SEND, Henry Morris, etc). I felt at home there, but education doesn't stand still. IVC reluctantly became an academy in 2012, and in 2016 formed a MAT with me as its first CEO. In many ways, my ideal role.

As other "founder" CEOs have acknowledged, we were making it up. It was exciting and unpredictable. In



ROBERT CAMPBELL

Former headteacher and CEO

Exasperation has driven me to retire early

the four years since its foundation, the trust grew and I stepped into being an interim head twice. I got my head around trust governance and became fully acquainted with the Academies Financial Handbook (Test me!). I enjoyed

Addenbrooke's, where A&E told me it was a suspected heart attack. It was a shock. Sure, I'd had a stressful decade or so as a head, but I was also physically fit and a good runner no candidate for a heart attack. A

"I've witnessed more nonsense in the past ten months than the past ten years"

working with the other trust CEOs as we forged a new model for education.

Then, in October 2019, I had constricting chest pains climbing a local hill. I thought it was a virus, but Sarah hastily sent me to

week later, I was in Papworth, next door, for a procedure and a lifetime prescription of medication. Still, nothing put me off getting back to school.

Then Covid arrived. A nasty bout



took me out of action for 11 days. But I recovered and settled into lockdown leadership. The trust needed me.

But it only took a matter of weeks from that point for my perspective to change. I have disagreed with a lot from government over the years, but I have witnessed more nonsense in the past ten months than probably the previous ten years put together. There is an ineptitude about this regime that is making things so much worse. Watching peers grow increasingly exasperated at what we are obliged to implement, feeling that exasperation myself, I took early retirement.

In the summer of 2019, Sarah and I had relocated after she had secured a new job in her home county of Cumbria. Coming out of lockdown, I simply couldn't face the thought of a return to weekly commutes. I tried to secure a trust role up here, but my heart wasn't in it. The years of leadership have taken their toll on me, as they have done with many of my peers. Fortunately, I guess, my diseased heart taught me a lesson about the value of living better while I still had a chance to learn it.

I'm conscious there's some privilege behind my decision, but I don't imagine I'll be alone in weighing up the options and deciding there's life after the DfE. I'm now living a beautiful quiet life, teaching a couple of days a week, keeping a house clean and tidy and writing poetry and music. I'm earning much less than 10 per cent of what I used to, but I'm happy and healthy. It's sad you can't be a head and be that too.

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Running the Room: The teacher's guide to behaviour

Author: Tom Bennett

Publisher: John Catt Educational

Reviewer: Bennie Kara, deputy head, The Bemrose School

Education circles will be familiar with the ubiquitous Tom Bennett, founder of ResearchEd and, since 2015, government "behaviour tsar". In his latest work, he guides us through a curriculum for behaviour designed to support teachers new and old in maintaining order in their classrooms.

In a book that starts off slowly (the majority of his practical strategies start to appear nearly halfway through), Bennett leads teachers through the science of behaviour using common metaphors. The book's title is a metaphor derived from Bennett's own experiences of working in nightclubs, where keeping order and ensuring safety was an exercise in organisation, anticipation and preparation of the space.

Throughout, the concept of firefighting is used to demonstrate the need to make behaviour strategies preventative – to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to poor behaviour. The unifying thread of the text is that prevention is better than cure – that "a fence at the top of a cliff is preferable to an ambulance at the bottom".

Bennett's argument over 340 pages of substantive material is that creating a culture of good behaviour in the classroom is a deliberate and considered process, in which the teacher is an agent of authority, and the gatekeeper for the rule of law, not just in school but subsequently in wider society. Through explorations of philosophy, psychology and politics with a small 'p', he outlines behaviour management in two distinct sections: "Human Nature" and "Creating

the Culture".

In many ways, there is nothing revolutionary here. What is important is the emphasis on behaviour needing to be taught, not told. Bennett maintains this is a systematic process like any other transference and retention of knowledge. He makes the allegedly intangible, tangible; asserting (correctly, in my opinion) that this approach takes the guesswork out of behaviour management and facilitates better learning for all. New teachers are far too often left to discover independently how to run the room, which leads inevitably to exhaustion and disillusion – and ultimately, poor retention of teaching personnel.

It is worth mentioning that *Running the Room* anchors itself in a very particular education theory. One only has to look at the list of endorsements to know that the book is predicated on what some call "traditionalist" principles. Be under no illusion: this is a book that deals in routines, rules,

conformity and scripts as well as rewards and relationships. If the thought of this makes you break out into hives, this book may not be your thing.

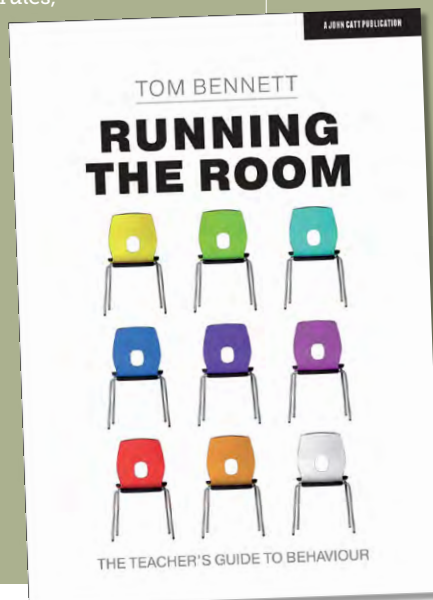
Whether one buys into the "progressive vs traditionalist" binary or not, at times we

witness Bennett himself slipping into partisan commentary on the merits of the strategies in his book. Often footnoted, the commentary at times feels unnecessary and generalised. Those who disagree with his philosophy are said to have "little experience of lack" and treat children "as guinea pigs for the fairy tales they tell themselves". The same footnote asserts that "considerable sections of the education sector [...] think this way". Such assertions detract from what is otherwise an excellent guide to systematic behaviour management.

Unfortunately, Bennett misses an opportunity to thoroughly explore the thornier aspects of behaviour management. Teacher perception of groups of children is only directly addressed towards the end of the book. He mentions how we might unconsciously reward students disproportionately, but does not tackle the issue of how this negatively affects particular groups. How this curriculum

might help solve that problem is left unexplored.

The ultimate test of a behaviour book is whether it can be directly applied to the classroom and *Running the Room* certainly can. Amidst the references to Hume, Locke, Hirsch, Dylan Wiliam, Marzano, Aristotle, Rousseau and Hans Gruber from *Die Hard*, there is a behaviour curriculum here that may just make the lives of new teachers far less complicated and exhausting.



Reviews



Our blog reviewer Naureen Khalid,
chair of governors and trustee, Connect
Schools Academy Trust

@5Naureen

Finding the balance

@jillberry102

Jill Berry is an ex-head and a consultant who writes very eloquently about leadership matters. In her latest blog, based on her recent WomenED presentation, Berry explores the important concept of balance. She makes the point that all through our lives, events happen and priorities change which necessitate us having to realign and restore our personal balance. She ponders some questions we can ask ourselves to work out if we are striking a balance in our lives or not, and also talks about striving to find a balance between challenge and support, which makes this a useful read for governors too. Governance is a balance between support and challenge; though during the present crisis the balance needs to be tilted slightly towards support. Berry notes that in some cases there may not be enough support for staff from governors – a timely reminder for governors to be proactive in offering help and reassurance.

Race diversity on boards: our commitments to action

@NGAEmmaK

For boards to be effective, we need people

TOP BLOGS of the week

from diverse communities who bring both diverse life experiences and diverse skills. The National Governance Association's (NGA) annual survey provides valuable insight in this area and has a sufficiently well-established database to identify trends. Its CEO, Emma Knights, has blogged the survey and the NGA's commitment to increasing board diversity, laying out seven commitments that the NGA has made to encourage progress in this area. These include commitment to research into why people from BAME communities do not join boards, improving NGA's guidance and information about equality and diversity and looking at their own board's composition. London seems to be the most ethnically diverse region and there may be lessons to be learnt from experiences there.

Thirty days has September

@thesarkyclerk

When a headteacher asked on Twitter if she was the only one who felt it was September 432rd, it got Fee Stagg thinking. In this post, she notes that some heads have reported not having had a day off since February. Leaders have been impacted by the need to keep on top of updates from DfE, bubbles and staff having to be sent home to self-isolate, as well as cancellation of CPD events and an increase in complaints. Stagg describes being left speechless at the fact that some governors have neglected to ask after the wellbeing of school leaders

and goes on to pose some questions all would do well to reflect upon. These are, to repeat a much-used phrase, unprecedented times and the questions posed here by Stagg present an excellent starting point to evaluate their impact on wellbeing and workload.

Now – more than ever – is a time to speak up and be curious

@GovernorHub

The most recent Governor Hub blogpost looks at the role of the SEND governor during the present crisis. In conversation with SEND expert Anne Heavey, we hear about what SEND governors should be looking at and the questions they should be asking to support schools through the pandemic. She emphasises that it is imperative that the "SEND lens" is applied to everything and ensuring that pupils at SEND support level are not ignored, but to ensure that the SEND register isn't used inappropriately.

The thorny issue of tracking in early years

@jpembroke

James Pembroke is one of the most sensible voices commenting on assessment and data. In his latest, hot-off-the-press post, he writes about data collected in EYFS and argues that much of this is unnecessary. Governors, especially those governing EYFS settings, will find this blog useful. The development of an assessment system is operational and should be left to school leaders, but governors can and should be asking if the system is purposeful. Is it simply a checklist and would learning actually suffer if teachers stopped collecting that data? Is the assessment system really just "levels" under a new name and is it trying to measure progress? Are teacher assessments being used for performance management? Pembroke makes a good case for a frank conversation between governors and leaders and provides a useful scaffold to ensure it's constructive.

Research

Ambition Institute's Harry Fletcher-Wood will review a research development each half term. Contact them @Ambition_Inst or @HFletcherWood if you have a topic you'd like him to explore

How can we help students to commit to action – then act on their commitment?

Harry Fletcher-Wood, associate dean at Ambition Institute

We usually want students to do something differently, whether it's working harder in lessons, doing homework more regularly, or being nicer to a peer. To get students from feeling broadly positive about an idea to actually acting on it, we need them to commit to the action – really commit to it – and then we need to help them make, and act upon, a concrete plan to achieve it. This issue is particularly important if we want students to keep learning independently – while self-isolating, for example.

In a past *Schools Week* research review, Stuart Kime highlighted the value of setting clear goals and making plans for how to achieve them. Recently, researchers have been fine-tuning this approach, and the result seems tailor-made to get students started.

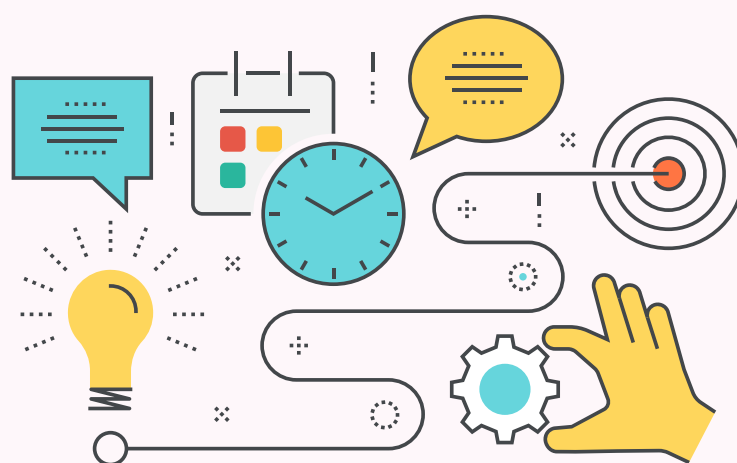
Researchers have developed a four-step model to develop the kind of commitment that promises change. One study tested this approach with primary pupils in the US, 85 per cent of whom were in receipt of free school meals.

First, children were asked to think about and write down their "most important wish or goal that's related to school work". They were told it should be challenging yet achievable but not what it should be.

Second, children wrote down the best consequence of achieving their goal – then spent a few minutes thinking quietly about that consequence.

Next, they wrote down an obstacle they thought likely to prevent them from achieving their wish and took time to reflect on that too.

The idea behind steps two and three is that thinking vividly about the goal, its consequences and obstacles that might hold



them back turns nice ideas into firm "goals toward which individuals are now strongly committed".

Finally, children made a plan. They wrote down when and where they might encounter the obstacle and came up with a plan to overcome it using an "If..., then..." template (for example, "If I get stuck on a question, then I'll ask the teacher").

This final step is designed to encourage children to think through how the obstacle can be overcome. The plans themselves may seem incredibly obvious, but a separate research review and meta-analysis found that they made "an important difference to whether or not people achieve their goals", by helping people to "recognise opportunities to act and respond to these opportunities swiftly and effortlessly".

The children in the primary school study were told this process was called a "Woop" – "Wish-Outcome-Obstacle-Plan". (Researchers call it Mental Contrasting with Implementation Intentions, or MCII.) They were encouraged to use it to help them pursue any and all academic or personal goals.

Half spent three hours learning to Woop, and half – the control group – were taught to focus solely on the positive outcomes of their goals. When researchers checked how they were

doing later that year, Woop students had received better grades, attended school more and behaved better. This relatively simple technique made a big difference.

The same approach has been used to encourage people to take on a range of desirable behaviours, from regulating anger to eating better and exercising more. For example, in another study, researchers encouraged university students to use this technique to plan their time management. The success of the approach prompted the authors to conclude that Woop (or MCII) is a "time- and cost-effective self-regulation strategy that people can use by themselves in order to remedy their time management and thus improve their everyday life and long-term development". (This kind of approach – suggesting a specific goal – is more common than the approach in the primary school, in which children picked their own goal.)

The primary school researchers, meanwhile, concluded by critiquing the limits of positive thinking alone. They suggested that there is a "widely held belief... that thinking positively about the future motivates self-regulated behaviour change in the present". Instead, they suggest that if we want to help students achieve something (or achieve something ourselves) "it's more effective to mentally contrast positive thoughts about a desired future with obstacles standing in its way".



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

MONDAY

Conservative Party members were treated to a virtual "fireside chat" with education secretary Gavin Williamson as part of the party's online conference.

Instead of giving a speech, Williamson opted to be interviewed by his former teacher Peter Ashton.

But the student became the teacher when Ashton couldn't get his iPad working and Williamson had to pitch in to help.

We expect a fine for failing the legal duty to deliver effective online education will be in the post to Mr Ashton.



Harry Yorke
@HarryYorke1

Gavin Williamson's former teacher, who is hosting his Q&A, is struggling to work the iPad.

Mr Williamson has had to step in to help find the questions he's supposed to be answering.

11:20 AM · Oct 5, 2020 · Twitter Web App

15 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 42 Likes

We learned this week that a delay to the reporting of thousands of coronavirus cases was caused by problems with using an Excel spreadsheet.

Oh the irony! Back in 2012, the then education secretary Michael Gove opted to phase out ICT from the curriculum for his swanky new computing qualifications. Gove said this was because ICT focused on teaching kids programs that were

"already creaking into obsolescence", highlighting stuff like "how to work a spreadsheet". LOL.

TUESDAY

Prime minister Boris Johnson was keen to stress his newfound love of one-to-one teaching when he made his (virtual) conference speech.

He said he wanted to "take further" the idea of one-to-one teaching, both for pupils in need of catch-up support and those of "exceptional ability".

But his overtures on favour of tutoring weren't followed up by any concrete policies (he gave us more details about his weight that

his policy ideas), leaving us all to speculate whether he was signalling the potential future expansion of the National Tutoring Programme, or simply waffling on.

WEDNESDAY

Schools minister Nick Gibb was careful to point out in a Westminster Hall debate this

week that his department has provided schools with funding to cover additional cleaning costs "incurred due to confirmed or suspected Covid-19 cases".

He was responding to concerns about the financial impact of the pandemic on schools.

But what he didn't acknowledge was that schools have no way of claiming the many hundreds of millions spent on preventative measures.

Still, it's not as if the government

told schools to put many of those measures in place itself...oh no, wait...

THURSDAY

We reported last week on how surprise new relationships and sex education guidance was causing confusion in schools, particularly with its diktats that schools avoid resources from anti-capitalist groups.

The guidance isn't actually statutory, but if schools do decide to follow it then they might have to think twice about using anything from national treasure Sir David Attenborough after he said this week that the "excesses the capitalist system has brought us have got to be curbed somehow".

FRIDAY

Headteachers will be gunning for Ofsted when they assemble for the NAHT's virtual conference this Friday.

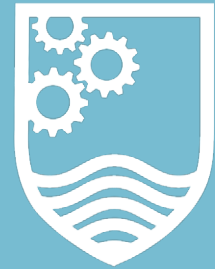
Union president Ruth Davies will use her speech to attack the watchdog for failing to "back off" during the pandemic to allow school leaders "the space they need to operate".

Interestingly, Amanda Spielman won't be speaking at this year's event as she did last year. Has the relationship soured that much since May 2019? (WiW guesses that the union threatening legal action over the watchdog's school "visits" might do that.)

Then again, education secretary Gavin Williamson isn't appearing either, despite his predecessors having done so in most recent years.

BLOXWICH ACADEMY PRIMARY

DEPUTY HEADTEACHER & ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER



DEPUTY HEADTEACHER SALARY: £49,019 - £55,336

ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER SALARY: £43,250 - £49,019

CLOSING DATE: FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2020

If you are passionate about school improvement and looking to join a Leadership Team where you can truly make a difference, then Bloxwich Academy could well be the place to take your next career step. Bloxwich Academy serves a community where there is much socio-economic deprivation and the pupil population is characterised by pupil premium being the majority rather than minority. It is a place where you can literally improve the lives of young people.

Part of the Matrix Academy Trust, Bloxwich Academy is an all-through school which was only five years ago rated as one of the worst performing schools in the country. It has since transformed, to the extent that the Secondary Phase became the most-improved school for pupil progress in 2017, and the Primary Phase has achieved drastically improved results, that are on now on the cusp of the national average.

A new Headteacher has been recently appointed to lead Bloxwich Primary on the next step of its journey. As the number of pupils on roll at the Academy is rising rapidly, the current Leadership Team is being extended and restructured, presenting a unique opportunity to create and evolve roles suited to a candidate's specific experience and expertise.

Applicants for the role of **Assistant Headteacher** should be an experienced middle leader with a track record of improving standards both within and outside their own classroom. The post will have teaching commitments assigned.

Applicants for the role of **Deputy Headteacher** should have a track record of significantly improving standards across the primary phase. The role will in principal have only light teaching commitments.

One of our priorities is to appoint a leader who is passionate about pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, able to promote excellence both in the classroom and across the whole Academy. Teachers at the Academy are energetic, passionate and truly care about the quality of education that children receive. We therefore require a leader who can evolve the current curriculum, develop consistent approaches to teaching and work with middle leaders to nurture the strong skill set that staff already possess.

Behaviour is currently graded as 'good', and you only need to visit the school to see why; children respond extremely positively to staff, and the Academy has a very friendly yet purposeful atmosphere. We require a leader with the motivation and relevant experience to work closely with pastoral and curriculum leads to promote outstanding behaviours for learning. The successful candidate will deliver an enriching programme of personal development for all our children, especially the large proportion of those who are vulnerable and/or have special educational needs.

The successful candidate will have access to a range of professional development opportunities at Bloxwich Academy and across the Matrix Academy Trust. This is an exciting and rare opportunity to join an all-through senior leadership team that is passionately dedicated to school improvement and knows how to make it happen.

We would encourage all interested applicants to visit the school to get a feel for the unique flavour of our wonderful Academy!

Visit www.matrixacademytrust.co.uk/vacancies to download an application form and send it to ASeager@bloxwichacademy.co.uk





Hollygirt
SCHOOL

Peridot



HEADTEACHER

About the role

Hollygirt School has been striving to maintain its unique position within the Nottingham independent sector and the relatively new Trustee Board are keen to build on the significant achievements to date, and develop a strategy to increase capacity and income for future years. The Headteacher will work with the Board of Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team to provide leadership, vision, and direction for the school. The new Headteacher will be the key driver in further improving the offer and making it the "school of choice" for Nottinghamshire families.

The Headteacher will be responsible for the day-to-day management of all school operations encouraging a culture that balances the promotion of excellence, equality and high expectations for all with a commitment to structured pastoral support. The Headteacher will lead the SLT in delivering a curriculum aimed at continuous improvement for all pupils, including those with SEND. At Hollygirt, we celebrate the achievements and progress of all. The Headteacher will work with the Bursar to manage resources effectively and efficiently and look for opportunities to increase revenue streams to improve teaching and learning and to provide a safe and harmonious school environment.

Who we are looking for

We are seeking a candidate with successful experience of leading and managing improvement strategies and successful change programmes. This is a great opportunity to use your skills in strategic planning, and to develop and implement initiatives to increase numbers on roll and revenue streams. The school is looking for DfE recognised qualified teacher status and experience of leadership in an educational setting. The candidate will demonstrate a proven track record of either raising attainment or sustaining good or outstanding achievement and progress in a whole school environment. In keeping with the school's strong ethos, you must understand the needs of all pupils aged 3-16 to facilitate an inclusive school approach.

You will be expected to have high order analytical and problem-solving skills and the ability to make informed judgements. In consultation with the SLT, you will be required to make and present strategic recommendations to the board. A key part of the role will be marketing the school and promoting all the benefits that we have to offer – you will be representing the school to all stakeholders, prospective parents, the local community, press and the independent school sector. Therefore, the successful individual will be a natural and a compelling communicator who is able to present confidently and professionally in a variety of media to a range of audiences.

For more information and to apply, please visit the job page on Peridot Partners' website: <https://bit.ly/3d2YJTR>

To arrange a confidential chat, please contact our lead consultants at Peridot Partners:

Sally Lawson-Ritchie | sally@peridotpartners.co.uk | 07904 158737

Drew Richardson-Walsh | drew@peridotpartners.co.uk | 07739 364033

Closing date: 12pm, Monday 23rd November 2020 | Salary: £65,000 - £75,000

Hollygirt School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment and undergo appropriate checks.



Saint GREGORY'S
Bath

"In Christ we flourish"

Saint Gregory's, Bath
Combe Hay Lane,
Bath, BA2 8PA
T 01225 832873

Deputy Headteacher: Pastoral

This is an excellent opportunity for a talented and enthusiastic colleague to join the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at Saint Gregory's and to be instrumental in continuing to develop and enhance our pastoral provision as a centre for excellence to ensure the best possible outcomes for all our children and young people. The successful candidate will bring considerable passion and commitment to the role, working across the school to create a common vision of excellence, helping to make Saint Gregory's a truly exceptional place to learn and work in.

Full time, permanent

Salary: Leadership Scale L15-L19

The closing date is midnight on **Sunday 18 October 2020**

Interviews will be held on **21 and 22 October 2020**

Visit www.st-gregorys.org.uk to apply

Saint Gregory's is an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to the safeguarding and welfare of our students and expect all staff to share this commitment. An enhanced disclosure from the DBS is required for all successful applicants.

The Active Learning Trust

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ALT wishes to appoint a second Assistant Director of Education to this interesting and challenging new post working with our schools across Cambridgeshire & Suffolk.

The Trust has 21 Schools across the primary secondary and special phases. As part of the central team you will have a successful record of leadership at school/MAT or LA level and will work Trust-wide as the key professional adviser on standards, curriculum, and improvement with our family of Headteachers. They will look to you, and rely on you to mentor their activities and approaches, as well as to encourage, challenge, support & guide them in delivering constant and evidence-based improvement.

Salary package expected to be up to £80k pa.

To discuss the role informally contact our Director of Education
David Hilton. david.hilton@activelearningtrust.org

To apply – complete an application form available via
(www.activelearningtrust.org) or directly from
jan.steel@activelearningtrust.org

Closing date 5 November 2020.

Likely interview 12 November 2020.

Lexden Springs School

Deputy Head Teacher SLD/PMLD Special School

Are you committed and passionate about therapeutic SEND Education? Are you an outstanding teacher who is willing to go above and beyond to deliver the very best opportunities and outcomes for all pupils?

We are looking for an experienced school leader with extensive experience in a SEND school environment to join our strong successful established team. This is a real opportunity to make a difference for the children that we teach. This is a role which combines strategic development with operational delivery daily.

At Lexden Springs School, Positive Behaviour Support and Person-Centred Approaches are of paramount importance and you will contribute to the continued strategic and operational development of this.

As a member of the SLT you will play a critical role in the translation of its vision into clear objectives that promote and sustain measurable school development; ensuring that the school continuously improves and is aspirational for our students.

For more info email hr@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk

EDU WEEK JOBS

SCHOOLS WEEK

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advertising@schoolsweek.co.uk



The Russett School

Executive Head Teacher (Cheshire)

Leadership: L27 to L32

Contract Type: Full Time

Contract Term: Permanent

An exciting opportunity has arisen at the Russett Learning Trust for the post of Executive Head Teacher. The Trustees of the Russett Learning Trust and Governors of the Russett School are looking to recruit a dedicated, inspiring and exceptional person with drive and commitment to lead and develop the Russett School and support the Board with the growth of the Russett Learning Trust.

We are seeking a candidate with experience of successful strategic headship/leadership in the mainstream primary/special school sector and/or as part of a Multi Academy Trust or Single Academy Trust.

The Russett Learning Trust was established in September 2015 and the Russett School is a special academy providing outstanding education for pupils and young people from ages 2 to 19 years with Severe Learning Difficulties, Speech and Language Difficulties and Complex Needs.

Working at the Russett School offers the opportunity to work with a highly trained and committed staff team who are dedicated to the delivery of outstanding learning to all our students.

The fundamental vision of The Russett Learning Trust is to be a centre of excellence in providing outstanding training, education and care. If you share this vision you will be well placed to join us and make a difference.

The Russett Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils and expects all those working at the Trust to share this commitment. Clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service is required prior to appointment.

To apply please complete a Russett Learning Trust's application form together with a covering letter explaining why you are suitable for this position.

Potential candidates will have an opportunity to tour the academy on **Wednesday 14th October** or **Monday 19th October**. To arrange your visit please contact jhughes@russett.cheshire.sch.uk or call **01606 853005**.

Applications are returnable to jhughes@russett.cheshire.sch.uk .

Closing Date: Friday 6th November 2020 at noon.

Shortlisting: Tuesday 10th November 2020

Interviews: Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th November 2020

Start Date: 1st September 2021

aston education

Interim Deputy Principal (Primary) and Interim Assistant Principal (Primary)

These roles are based at a vibrant 3-11 Primary Academy in South East London (inner London), part of a respected Multi-Academy Trust that has primary and secondary schools and is supported by a Teaching School.

This is a great opportunity for driven and dynamic Senior Leaders to strengthen this 1-form entry Primary School's leadership team. The roles are available due to staff relocation.

You will have the ability to inspire others and support the school's journey of improvement to become a school where children can achieve their very best.

Within a caring environment, the school sets high expectations for behaviour and academic outcomes. Children are supported and challenged in their learning to be successful in the next stage of their educational journey.

Either one of these Senior Leaders will take on a SENCO responsibility and has the National Award for SEN Coordination.

Interim Deputy Principal

The Deputy Principal will lead on the Curriculum and Teaching. They will also lead a Key Stage.

This full-time role is initially from October half term 2020 until April 2021. There is a possibility of a permanent job for the right candidate.

Interim Assistant Principal

The Assistant Principal will lead a Key Stage.

This full-time role is initially from January 2021 until April 2021, but there is a possibility of a permanent job for the right candidate.

The School offers:

- Pupils who are proud of their school and want to learn
- Settled teaching and staff team
- A wide range of CPD through the MAT
- An extensive support network through the MAT

Closing date: Thursday 8th October at 5pm

Applications: Please contact Tarja Aila at Aston Education for a confidential conversation and to apply, tarja.aila@astoneducation.co.uk or call **07399 399 753**.

Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Director of School Improvement

Reports to: Chief Executive Officer

Location: New Forest and Southampton

Salary: L25 - L31 (£74,103 - £85,827, subject to national pay awards)

Full Time (Teachers Pay and Conditions)



An exciting opportunity has arisen to join an established, successful and growing Multi Academy Trust. Trustees are looking to appoint a Deputy Chief Executive Officer to enhance the already substantial and successful Inspire Team.

We are a truly collaborative, values led Trust, thriving on the positive relationships and willing involvement of like-minded professionals. We are looking to recruit an individual to champion school improvement, with the insight to identify and promote best practice, and the courage to challenge our schools to improve even further, by leading partnership working across the Trust's academies and within the wider system leaders' network.

This newly created role is an exciting opportunity for an exceptional and inspirational primary school improvement professional who has the aspiration, integrity and ability to help support the ongoing improvements across the Trust's academies. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer will be at the heart of this work.

We are looking for a Deputy Chief Executive Officer & Director of School Improvement who shares our values and who has the drive and resilience to achieve our strategic vision. They will be committed to implementing educational excellence across our Trust, supported by the CEO, the Trust Strategic Leadership Team and a committed Board. I hope you share our sense of excitement at the opportunities that lie ahead to further build and grow our successes.

Applicant letter, full job description, person specification and application form can be downloaded from our website at www.inspirelearningpartnership.org/deputy-chief-executive-officer/

Please return your completed application by email to hr@ILPartnership.org

Closing Date: 12th October 2020 at noon

Interview Date: 3rd/4th November 2020