

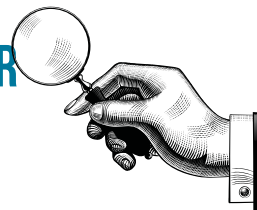
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PUPILS NEED
MORE RIGHTS**

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**GDPR: HAS THE DFE
DONE ENOUGH TO
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OUT IN THE COLD: THE SCHOOLS NO-ONE WANTS

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Ofsted inspection shake-up to save watchdog £2.3m

- Failing schools will get more time to improve
- Good schools get extra year between inspections
- Ofsted on track to save millions as cuts bite

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ **Exclusive**

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Interview

THE MYTH-BUSTING
INSPECTOR SPEAKS
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Shane Mann
MANAGING EDITOR
(INTERIM)

@SHANERMANN
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM



Laura McInerney
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

@MISS_MCINERNEY
LAURA.MCINERNEY@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK

Please inform the Schools Week editor of any errors or issues of concern regarding this publication.



Cath Murray
FEATURES EDITOR

@CATHMURRAY
CATH.MURRAY@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Freddie Whittaker
CHIEF REPORTER

@FCDWHITTAKER
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Tom Mendelsohn
SUB EDITOR

@TOM_MENDELSON
TOM.MENDELSON@LSECT.COM



Alix Robertson
SENIOR REPORTER

@ALIXROBERTSON4
ALIX.ROBERTSON@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Jess Staufenberg
SENIOR REPORTER

@STAUFENBERGJ
JESS.STAUFBENBERG@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Pippa Allen-Kinross
REPORTER

@PIPPA_AK
PIPPA.ALLENKINROSS@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK

THE TEAM

Head designer:
Designer:
Photographer:
Financials:
Sales team leader:
Sales executive:
Administration:
PA to managing director:

Nicky Phillips
Matthew Willson
Ellis O'Brien
Helen Neilly
Bridget Stockdale
Clare Halliday
Georgina Heath
Victoria Boyle



Sam King
FEATURES AND
DIGITAL REPORTER

@KINGSAMANTHA
SAMANTHA.KING@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK

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Learning & Skills Events, Consultancy and Training Ltd
161-165 Greenwich High Road
London SE10 8JA
T: 020 8123 4778
E: news@schoolsweek.co.uk

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Ofsted hopes to save £2.3m on inspection cutbacks

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

Ofsted will save more than £2 million by giving ‘good’ schools – and those with “serious weaknesses” – an extra year between inspections, *Schools Week* can exclusively reveal.

The watchdog last week revealed in a blog that it will increase the maximum time between inspections of ‘inadequate’ schools with leaders who have the capacity to improve, from 18 months to two and a half years – but it didn’t mention how much money it expected to save as a result.

Schools rated ‘good’ will also now wait up to four years for their next inspection, a short, one-day visit, rather than three. Those in special measures will also have their wait increased from two years to two and a half.

According to Sean Harford, Ofsted’s national director of education, the changes give inspectors “greater discretion about the date of reinspection”.

However, Ofsted told *Schools Week* this week that it expects to save around £2.3 million by carrying out less regular inspections.

Further education colleges received a similar deal earlier this month. At the time, Ofsted admitted to *Schools Week*’s sister paper FE Week that it would save £400,000 by increasing the maximum inspection gaps for ‘good’ colleges from three to five years.



Ofsted insisted that like other public sector organisations it had been “charged with doing better with less”.

Its core budget was reduced by £54 million between 2010-11 and 2016-17, while it is expected to make savings of £13.1 million in 2017-18 alone.

By 2019-20, Ofsted will have had its budget reduced by 38 per cent since the start of the decade.

“We are committed to working in a way that allows us to deliver effective, high-quality inspections while meeting the challenge of reduced resources,” said a spokesperson.

School leaders welcomed the change as Ofsted’s acknowledgement that “improvements take time”.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the

ASCL, warned that when a school is inspected too early, “it can result in another negative judgment and the school is back to square one”.

Working with other schools is the best way to help schools improve, and there is “no shortage of oversight in the system” even with longer time periods between inspections. Regional schools commissioners are also on hand, he pointed out.

School leaders would still expect Ofsted to respond to requests for an inspection because they think they’ve become ‘outstanding’. But the inspectorate should also be funded sufficiently to do its job, he added.

His words were echoed by Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the school leaders’ union NAHT, who said “high-stakes” inspections could distract from the more important activities of teaching and day-to-day management.

“Inspections are important but leaving

enough time between inspections for school leaders to manage their schools freely, and implement long-term improvement plans, is vital,” he added.

Schools rated ‘requires improvement’ are already reinspected within a 30-month time period, so the new announcements do not affect them.

Harford added that regular monitoring of ‘RI’ and ‘inadequate’ schools will “continue as it is now”, and if a school needs to be inspected more urgently “we will still have the flexibility to do so”.

The changes are effective immediately.

The ‘serious weakness’ label is applied to schools in the ‘inadequate’ category where performance requires significant improvement, but leaders demonstrate a capacity to improve. ‘Inadequate’-rated schools without such a capacity are placed in special measures.

Sean Harford interview, see p. 16-17

OFSTED GRADE	TIME BETWEEN INSPECTIONS	
	BEFORE	NOW
GOOD SCHOOLS	3 YEARS	4 YEARS
SERIOUS WEAKNESSES	UP TO 18 MONTHS	UP TO 30 MONTHS
SPECIAL MEASURES	UP TO 24 MONTHS	UP TO 30 MONTHS
REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	UP TO 30 MONTHS	UP TO 30 MONTHS

Schools judged “outstanding” are exempt from further inspections but their performance will be monitored and an inspection will be carried out if the chief inspector or education secretary raises concerns.

Don’t boycott SATs, heads tell parents

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

Headteachers have warned parents not to take part in a planned boycott of this year’s SATs.

The campaign group Let Our Kids Be Kids is gearing up for a boycott of key stage 2 SATs, which begin in primary schools in mid-May. The group has even published a template for a withdrawal letter for parents of year six pupils to send into schools.

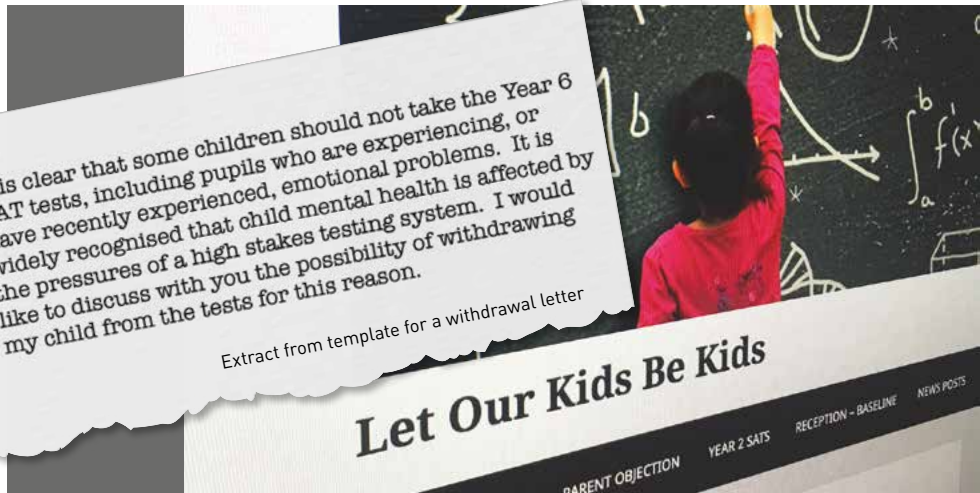
But the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), which represents around 18,000 school leaders, has told parents not to join in.

“We would advise parents against withdrawing their children from key stage 2 tests,” Julie McCulloch, ASCL’s interim director of policy, told *Schools Week*.

McCulloch acknowledged that the “high-stakes nature” of SATs should be lowered to reduce pressure on pupils, but stressed that assessment at key stage 2 “helps secondary schools know how much support they may need to give to a child”.

“We will continue to argue for these tests to be made a more proportionate part of the accountability system so that they are fairer on schools and better for children,” she said.

Headteachers are legally bound to administer key stage 2 SATs, but have come under increasing pressure in recent years, amid concerns that the tests damage pupils’



mental health.

The campaigners’ letter template, which asks school leaders to understand parents’ “desire to put the wellbeing of children ahead of school data” has already been downloaded thousands of times, according to The Independent.

The group also referred to comments made by a senior minister which acknowledged that children attending school are “not legally required to sit the national key stage tests”. Anne Milton, the skills minister, made the comments in a written response to a question from another MP.

McCulloch said parents and communities should be able to see how well schools are helping children progress, but she acknowledged there is currently too much focus on key stage 2 SATs in school performance tables and Ofsted inspections.

“We think the problem is the way these tests are used to hold schools to account, rather than with the principle of assessment itself,” she added.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, agreed that the assessment and accountability regime in primary schools “is not working for parents, schools or children”.

But he stopped short of either opposing or supporting the boycott.

“Too much emphasis is placed on high stakes testing which can distract from the wider curriculum,” he said, claiming that NAHT is “working to improve the system”.

The union has already won some

important concessions, including the decision to scrap compulsory SATs at age seven

Other unions are more supportive of moves to boycott the tests.

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers and the National Union of Teachers both voted to explore a boycott of primary tests at their annual conferences last year, even after the government made changes to simplify some of the SATs questions.

The Standards and Testing Agency also assessed the structure of the reading test paper, following complaints from teachers that pupils had been “completely demoralised” in 2016, when just half of year 6 children met the new expected standard at key stage 2.

In May 2017, 95 per cent of primary school teachers who responded to an online survey of NUT members in England said they believed that preparation for SATs did not support children’s access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

According to a Department for Education spokesperson, key stage 2 tests are “vital in helping to ensure children are learning to read, write and add up well, which lays the foundations for success at secondary school and beyond”.

“We trust schools not to put undue pressure on pupils when administering these assessments, and certainly not at the expense of their wellbeing,” the spokesperson said.

NEWS

THE SLOW SPEED OF EME

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Exclusive

Not a single failing school became an academy less than nine months after an inspection in at least 26 local authorities over the past three years, *Schools Week* can exclusively reveal.

Schools have been unable to secure takeovers due to a lack of sponsors, complicated PFI contracts, and even because regional schools commissioners sent academy orders through late – sometimes as much as a year after Ofsted first inspected them.

Freedom of Information requests to over 70 councils show that 35 schools took longer than two years to convert, even though the government aims to make turnarounds in nine months or under.

Only 11 councils managed to convert all their failing schools within this timeframe.

In several cases, schools were left so long they were reinspected and received higher grades, leading one policy expert to argue that their academy orders should be revoked.

A lack of suitable sponsors caused problems among 11 of the councils that failed to turn their schools around in time.

Wirral council said its RSC Vicky Beer took more than two years to find a suitable sponsor for two schools. The schools are now due to join a trust, though this has not yet taken place.

Woodford Primary School in Plymouth, waited almost a year before a sponsor could be found that was “acceptable” to the government, while Gloucestershire council said it had been working hard with its RSC, but that it lacked suitable academy sponsors in the area.

Buckinghamshire council similarly cited “lack of sponsor capacity” for delays of between one and two years across six of its ‘inadequate’ schools – and is now visiting multi-academy trusts in other local authorities to “widen and maximise opportunities”.

Faith schools are particularly at risk of hold-ups due to an agreement between the church and the Department for Education that only trusts accepted by the church can take ‘inadequate’ faith schools over.

St Anne’s Roman Catholic High School in Stockport waited three and a half years to convert after it was rated ‘inadequate’ in October 2014 over teachers’ “low expectations”. Salford diocese needed to find a “suitable school” to sponsor St Anne’s via a new trust, but was delayed.

The Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England School in Warrington also waited almost three years “due to the time taken to create” the Challenge Academy Trust, according to the council.

Another faith school, St Joseph’s Roman Catholic primary, in west Yorkshire, will have been delayed by two years because there was “no church multi-academy trust” to sponsor it. This trust is “now being established” and the proposed takeover is for October this year.

The structure of headteacher boards, which help approve sponsorship changes, does not improve the speed of decisions.

Pam Tuckett, a partner at accountancy firm Bishop Fleming, pointed out that headteacher boards often ask for additional information before making decisions, but the infrequency of the meetings means the process can go “backwards and forwards quite a few times” over a long period.

Commissioners are also sending out academy conversion orders late, councils warned.

In Southampton, Dudley and Surrey, RSCs only sent an academy order after many months elapsed since Ofsted published its report on a school.

At Woodside Primary School in Dudley, an “academy order was not received until 12 months afterwards” and it did not convert until almost two years after it was first put into special measures. There was also five-month delay on an order for another school, Ham Dingle Primary.

In Surrey, an order also arrived nearly six months later, and Southampton council waited for an academy order “for many months” without specifying how long.

North Tyneside council added that its RSC only appointed an interim executive board to one of their schools after 13 months, and that this board took a further 14 months to sort out the transfer. This “created instability for students and staff”, said a spokesperson.

One consequence of the slow drift towards academy status is that 11 schools subsequently came out of special measures even without conversion.

Foxfield Primary School moved from the bottom grade in May 2014 to ‘outstanding’ one year and four months later, but still converted to an academy, three years after the inspection. Three other schools moved from ‘inadequate’ to ‘good’ while waiting.

John Fowler, a policy manager at the Local Government Information Unit, pointed out that the education secretary has the legal power to revoke an academy order in case it closes instead.

They should consider revoking an academy order when a school is improving without converting, “especially when a multi-academy trust cannot be found,” he suggested.

Another school to improve its Ofsted grade was the Sholing Technology College in Southampton, which has been waiting for a new sponsor since it was rated ‘inadequate’ in 2016, and moved to ‘requires improvement’ last year.

Southampton council said the delay was due in part to a “lack of effective management” by its RSC Dominic Herrington.

Herrington, who oversees south London and the south-east, was the best-performing commissioner in 2015-16 according to the government’s key performance indicators for that year, including for the percentage of schools issued with an academy order and converted to academies.

Schools Week has approached the DfE for comment.



CASE FILE: A

SWINDON: NOT ONE SCHOOL CONVERTED ON TIME

Four maintained schools in the Wiltshire local authority were graded ‘inadequate’ between 2014 and 2017. Three took more than nine months to convert and the fourth remained with the council.

Ruskin Junior School was blasted by inspectors in 2014 for poor pupil behaviour, low pupil progress, especially among boys, and lots of exclusions. But the school only converted 16 months later, because the Blue Kite academy trust had to wait to “get their sponsor status confirmed”, the council claimed. This is the only school now with a new trust.

Both Abbey Park School and St Luke’s

special educational needs school have waited around 18 months to convert. Restrictions on land use brought things to a halt at Abbey Park, and though these issues are now resolved, a sponsor is yet to be found.

Funding issues at St Luke’s have delayed its move over to proposed sponsor the White Horse Federation.

The final school, Bridlewood Primary, came out of special measures just six months after inspectors noted declining standards. A new headteacher has a “very clear idea” of school improvement, and it was rated ‘requires improvement’ in January. The school is not now converting.

URGENCY ACADEMISATION

SCHOOLS THAT TOOK LONGEST TO FIND A TRUST & WHY: 2014 TO 2017

SCHOOL	MONTHS UNDER LA CONTROL SINCE INADEQUATE GRADE	REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER AREA	REASON
ST ANNE’S ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL	3 YEARS 6 MONTHS	LANCASHIRE AND WEST YORKSHIRE	WAITING FOR A CHURCH TRUST TO BE CREATED
CLIFTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL	3 YEARS 6 MONTHS	EAST MIDLANDS AND HUMBER	PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE; CUTS TO COUNCIL BUDGET
RIVER HOUSE SPECIAL SCHOOL	3 YEARS 6 MONTHS	WEST MIDLANDS	LEGAL BATTLE OVER FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
ROSE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL	2 YEARS 10 MONTHS	NORTH-WEST LONDON AND SOUTH CENTRAL ENGLAND	BAD CONDITION OF BUILDINGS AND FINANCIAL RISK
HATHAWAY PRIMARY SCHOOL	2 YEARS 4 MONTHS	NORTH-WEST LONDON AND SOUTH CENTRAL ENGLAND	LENGTH OF TIME TAKEN BY DFE TO FIND A SPONSOR

5

TOOK LONGER
D YEARS TO
VERT

11

LOCAL AUTHORITIES -
CONVERTED ALL THEIR
SCHOOLS ON TIME

CASE FILE: C

CROYDON: ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE GAME

No schools had delayed conversions in this south London patch – mainly because they’d already started converting when Ofsted arrived.
Ryelands Primary was rated ‘inadequate’ in 2014 after inspectors found teachers were giving work that was “too hard or, more often, too easy”. But Croydon said the process of academisation had already begun, and two months later the school was with Oasis Academy Trust. In 2017 it was rated ‘good’ with ‘outstanding’ leadership, and there was special praise for the trust for holding leaders to account “in an exceptionally thorough and robust manner”.
This timely transfer was matched by two other primary schools, with academisation already underway during the inspection.

However one ‘inadequate’ school was not converted at all. The Minster Junior School fell from ‘outstanding’ in 2010 to the bottom grade four years later because “too many pupils significantly underachieved”, but it remains with Southwark Diocese.
Two years later, the school was judged ‘requires improvement’. Inspectors noted the headteacher had “worked tirelessly” since the last inspection and the school is likely to keep improving.
Other councils have also reported church schools being allowed to stay with their diocese. For instance, Knowsley council simply reported of one of its ‘inadequate’ Catholic schools that “Liverpool Archdiocese do not academise schools”.

CASE FILE: B

DONCASTER: FOUR OUT OF EIGHT AIN’T GREAT

Four maintained schools remained with the Doncaster local authority for more than nine months, while four were converted on time.
When Edlington Victoria Primary School dropped from ‘good’ into special measures three years ago after leaders failed to “arrest a decline in standards”, the local authority asked for help from a nearby school. That school, the ‘outstanding’-rated Hill Top Primary, eventually applied to become the Exceed Learning Partnership.
The whole process took more than two years. During that time, the new executive headteacher managed to return the school to a ‘good’ grade in just a year and a half, before it finally converted and joined the new trust.

The same process was used with Scawsby Rosedale Primary School, which eventually joined another ‘outstanding’ LA school to become a trust after a 23-month wait.
Morley Place Junior School and Waverley Primary School were less successful. Both were rated ‘inadequate’ in 2015 and remained with the council for 13 months before joining the Wakefield City Academies Trust. WCAT subsequently announced plans to give up all 21 of its schools last September, leaving the two to find new homes all over again.
However, the remaining four schools all converted within the timeline, with one, Denaby Main Primary, moving to Astrea Academy Trust in a rapid four months.

ACTION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE LAUNCHES INQUIRY INTO ACADEMY CONVERSIONS

The parliamentary public accounts committee will grill officials from the Department for Education on whether converting schools to academies delivers “the right results” for pupils and taxpayers.
In particular, ministers will need to explain why it has taken the DfE longer than expected to convert underperforming schools into academies, despite their arguments these schools benefit the most from the change.
The inquiry, which will be held on May 2, was prompted by the National Audit Office’s report in February which noted that two thirds of maintained schools rated ‘inadequate’ took longer than ‘nine months to open as

academies.
The NAO estimates that 37,000 pupils were in maintained schools in January which Ofsted had put into special measures more than nine months previously, but which “had not yet opened as academies”.
That NAO also noted “considerable regional variation” in the number of sponsors nearby to underperforming schools. In a damning analysis, the NAO claimed that while the DfE was offering grants to help sponsors take on more schools, there was no evidence the DfE had actually “assessed whether this funding is helping”.

NEWS

‘OVERSUBSCRIBED’ DORSET PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS ARE TURNING AWAY EXCLUDED PUPILS

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

Pupil referral units in Dorset are turning away suspended pupils after the local authority ran out of money.

Dorset county council says its learning centres will not take any more pupils who are suspended from school or at risk of exclusion this term. The centres will only admit those who have been permanently excluded or are in need of medical supervision.

Now an inclusion expert has said the council could be trying to “signal” to schools they are overstressing the area’s PRUs by sending too many pupils there.

It was a “difficult decision” to close the centres to new temporary admissions, said Nick Jarman, the council’s director of children’s services, but his team has already funded places at the five PRUs “significantly beyond our statutory duty” for some time.

The situation was revealed during a hearing of the parliamentary education select committee, which is holding an inquiry into the quality of alternative provision across the country.

Jules Daulby, the director of education at the Driver Youth Trust, told MPs that Dorset PRUs were “absolutely full” with waiting lists and had been forced to shut their doors.

The council could be letting schools know they are sending too many pupils to PRUs who should be helped in a mainstream environment, Daulby, who has also taught in Dorset, told *Schools Week*.

“This could be a message to say, enough is enough, you’ve got to start including these children,” she said.

Before schools started converting to become academies, local authorities used to be able to “have a quiet word” with a school found to be suspending too many pupils.

“Now, the local authority doesn’t have as much control,” she continued. “The system is quite fragmented and it’s harder to track why these pupils are being sent to PRUs.”

PRUs and some schools in Dorset are “frustrated” by zero-tolerance behaviour policies at other schools in the area which are causing pupils to be excluded who shouldn’t be.

“Alternative provision should really only be for pupils who have very severe and complex needs and who require very small classes,” she said.

Jarman confirmed all five PRUs are now running very close to capacity.

The centres in Weymouth, Dorchester, Blandford, Sherborne and Christchurch will now only take in pupils who have been permanently told to leave their schools and those who “because of illness or other reasons, would not receive suitable education without such arrangements being made”.

The county council has “funded places significantly beyond our statutory duty from the high needs block which has contributed to a large deficit in the budget”.

EXCLUSIONS ‘BILL OF RIGHTS’ MUST NOT BECOME ‘TICK-BOX EXERCISE’

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Leading figures from the special educational needs community have backed calls for a “bill of rights” to protect pupils excluded from school, but want it to be more than just a “tick-box” exercise.

Jules Daulby, the director of education at the Driver Youth Trust, a national charity, has told MPs that there “absolutely should be a bill of rights” for excluded children and their parents.

Daulby was responding to a question from Robert Halfon, the chair of the parliamentary education committee, during a hearing about the quality of alternative provision. Halfon first proposed his idea of a bill of rights for excluded pupils in an interview with *Schools Week* in February.

Under Halfon’s proposal, a bill of rights would allow proper scrutiny of their school’s decision to kick them out. He is concerned about the lack of protection for pupils and their parents in situations where schools may have wrongly excluded them.

“I like the idea, as long as it’s truly reflective of parents,” said Daulby, who warned that panels formed to deliberate on exclusions risk becoming like SEN tribunals, where currently parents win in the vast majority of cases relating to new education and health care (EHC) plans.

“We know for instance that the SEN tribunals, there’s an 80-per-cent win with



Jules Daulby

regards to EHC plans. I think probably exclusion panels could end up the same.”

However, the bill of rights will only work if it promotes accountability, tracking pupils in the system, and includes families “from a very early age”. It must be “much more of a relationship with the family”.

“I think there absolutely should be a bill of rights for parents and children that are not coping or who have been excluded from mainstream, and we should know much more about them,” she said, adding that such protections must also be extended to those subject to informal exclusions, and “any child who is not having a mainstream education”.

Dr Louise Gazely, a senior lecturer in education at the University of Sussex, told

MPs meanwhile that some parents need more support to fight for the rights of their children than others.

“Some parents are much better placed to assert their rights than others, and one of the issues is many of the children who get tied up in these processes have parents who do not have the knowledge, the understanding, the trust, the experience to exert their rights,” she said.

“They don’t have access to advocacy either, so they are in a very dependent position on trust with professionals, some of whom do a very good job, and some of whom we know are not doing the right things. So I think it’s really important to recognise that some parents can leverage the system and some can’t, and we need to think about how we help them.”

Daulby suggested that information, advice and support services (IASS) – council bodies that support parents of children with special educational needs – should be extended to cover excluded pupils too. These IASS bodies used to be called parent partnership services, but were renamed recently to reflect additional social care and health responsibilities.

“We know there are so many unidentified special needs for children that are being excluded, that should be broadened as well,” she added. “IASS should not just be for children who have SEND. It should be for any child that has been excluded from school or is in danger of exclusion from school.”

England fall behind in disadvantaged pupils’ maths attainment

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

England needs to double the number of disadvantaged pupils who achieve the top GCSE grades in maths to catch up with the best-performing countries around the world, according to new Education Policy Institute research.

Just one in 10 disadvantaged pupils in England achieve a grade 7, 8 or 9 in GCSE maths, while nearly twice as many reach an equivalent level in Singapore.

Four in 10 disadvantaged pupils are failing to even reach the new GCSE standard pass mark of a grade 4 in maths, research by Professors John Jerrim and Toby Greany at the UCL Institute of Education has revealed.

The study converted the latest results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) into GCSE grades, allowing for a direct comparison of pupil performance between England and other nations.

The researchers compared pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) in England with disadvantaged pupils in other countries using PISA’s economic, social and cultural status index.

The results showed that under the new numerical GCSE grades, the average maths result of pupils eligible for FSM in England is 3.8, just under

the standard pass mark of 4.

Based on this analysis, England ranks 25th out of the 44 developed nations involved in the study.

England’s scores were around a third of a grade lower in maths than other western nations, such as Estonia, Canada, the Netherlands and Ireland, and half a grade lower than Macao, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

Not only was the performance of disadvantaged pupils weak in England, but there was also a significant gap of a whole grade between the maths results they achieved and the grades of their better-off peers.

In terms of this attainment gap in maths, England ranked 27th out of the 44 developed nations in the study.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the greatest barrier to improving outcomes for disadvantaged students is the struggle to recruit teachers.

“It cannot be a coincidence that maths outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are the most concerning finding in this report given that teacher shortages are very severe in this subject,” he said.

“The government missed its trainee teacher recruitment target for maths by more than 20 per cent last year – the fifth year in a row that it has fallen short.”

The performance of

disadvantaged pupils in England in reading was better than in maths, the research found. The country ranks 17th out of 44 for reading, with an average grade of 4.0 (a pass).

Canada, Finland, Estonia, Norway and Ireland all ranked higher than England in the performance of disadvantaged pupils in reading, scoring between 4.2 and 4.3.

The gap between FSM pupils and their peers in reading in England was around three-quarters of a GCSE grade (0.76) - roughly the average of all other countries in the report.

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, insisted the report’s findings should be considered “a national scandal”.

“We cannot afford to miss out on the untapped potential of disadvantaged pupils,” she said.

“The government’s inability to confront the harmful practice of ability grouping coupled with its desire to further expand selective schools will exacerbate the challenges highlighted in this report.

“It’s time for the government to work with us to build a better education system that works for every child, education professionals and wider society.”

A Department for Education spokesperson said the government’s reforms are driving “real improvements in English schools”, but acknowledged that “there is always more to do”.



Mary Bousted

NEWS

Charity Commission steps up safeguarding scrutiny at private schools

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

Investigates

The Charity Commission has played down rumours it is taking a stronger stance on safeguarding at private and unregistered schools after opening more investigations in the past four months than in the last two years combined.

The regulator, which is responsible for ensuring charity law is followed by private schools and unregistered settings with charitable status, has announced inquiries into three schools since January and appointed an interim manager to take over safeguarding at a fourth.

In comparison, inquiries were opened into one school and one sixth-form college in 2016, while no investigations were announced into any schools last year.

This increase in investigations has given way to speculation that the commission is stepping up its activities in the sector, amid growing concerns about safeguarding at several private and unregistered schools.

Ofsted has been seeking additional support to aid its crackdown on illegal and unregistered schools, although a spokesperson insisted nothing had changed in the relationship between the two watchdogs, despite the Charity Commission's apparent pressure on schools.

Independent schools are registered charities, but many settings that provide some education for pupils but are not officially registered as schools also have charitable status, making them accountable to the Charity Commission.

All education charities must demonstrate



Court sketch of Umar Haque

that they do work for the public benefit, but there is no official definition of what this means.

A House of Commons briefing paper released in September estimated that there are 1,300 schools registered as charities in England.

Exempt charities, including academies, free schools and voluntary-aided schools, cannot register with the Charity Commission and are regulated by the DfE, although the former can sometimes play a regulatory role.

So far this year inquiries have been announced into governance and administration at independent special school Hope House School in Nottinghamshire, into management and safeguarding at Lantern of Knowledge Educational Trust, which runs an Islamic boys school in east London, and into safeguarding at the four special schools run by the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

Earlier this month, the chief executive of the RNIB resigned over safeguarding failures at RNIB Pears Centre for Specialist Learning in Coventry after a number of "serious incidents" were reported to have taken place at the special school and children's home.

The RNIB also runs Sunshine House School in Middlesex, the Three Spires Primary Academy in Coventry and RNIB College Loughborough. All three offer specialist education and care to children and young people with visual impairments and other disabilities.

In March, Umar Haque, a former teacher at the Lantern of Knowledge Islamic School, was convicted of a range of terrorism offences at the Old Bailey. He had taught an Islamic Studies class and supervised pupils aged between 11 and 14 at the school, despite having no teaching qualifications.

The commission also announced last month that it had appointed an interim manager to take over safeguarding arrangements at Ampleforth Abbey and the St Laurence Education Trust, which run Ampleforth College.

It opened an inquiry into the school in 2016, investigating approaches to safeguarding and how allegations of abuse were handled at the private Catholic boarding school, where three monks and two teachers have been convicted of sex crimes against more than 30 pupils between 1960 and 2010.

According to the regulator's website, the only other investigation into a school announced in 2016 was an inquiry into Cardiff Sixth-Form College's failure to submit its accounts.

A spokesperson for the Charity Commission said that "safeguarding related issues are not new for the Commission" and that the regulator repeatedly reminds charities that safeguarding should be a "governance priority" as well as issuing regular alerts and guidance.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE SCHOOL FUNDING AND SEND SUPPORT

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

The parliamentary education committee has launched inquiries into the long-term funding needs of schools and sixth forms and support for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

The investigation, which launched on Thursday, will consider whether a 10-year financial plan is needed to preserve "high-quality" education.

It will look at the effectiveness of targeted funding for specific pupil groups, like the pupil premium, how the new national funding formula should be implemented and what resources are needed to support schools.

The committee also wants to hear evidence to inform school funding in the government's next spending review period, which begins in 2020. It wants evidence from evidence on the money needed for both pre- and post-16 education.

Robert Halfon, a former education minister who chairs the committee, warned that rising cost-pressures have led to "serious challenges in the provision of high-quality education".

"We need to move to a situation where education funding is not driven primarily by Treasury processes but rather by a long-term strategic assessment of our national priorities for education and skills," he said.

"This inquiry will examine whether it is time to have a 10-year plan for our schools and colleges, and what resources are required to put this plan into action."

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, described the funding inquiry as an "important move".

"School and college funding is the issue that just won't go away," he said. "There are too many parents, teachers, governors and school leaders pushing for more money for their children for the government to ignore these calls any longer."

"Hopefully the extra focus from the select committee will open the door to the Treasury and we'll see fresh investment."

The SEND inquiry, launched on Wednesday, will examine the quality and access to specialist provisions and the impact of "wide-reaching changes" to the system, introduced by the government in 2014.

These reforms include the move to replace statements of SEND with education and health care plans.

Halfon mentioned "rising concerns" about quality and access to SEND provision.

"It's been four years since major SEND reforms were introduced and it's important we examine whether the government's stated ambitions for simpler, improved and consistent help for children and young people with SEND have been met," he said.

Jo Campion, the deputy director at the National Deaf Children's Society, said the SEND inquiry was a "crucial opportunity to show the government the scale of the problem, but also to sketch out a roadmap for the future".

MPs are inviting written submissions from schools on both inquiries. Evidence for the funding inquiry should be submitted before May 30, and before June 14 for the SEND investigation.

SCHOOLS HURT BY OUTDATED FSM COST CALCULATIONS

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government is under pressure to increase the money it gives schools to pay for free meals for infant pupils.

The Lead Association for Catering in Education (LACA), which represents school catering companies, has urged ministers to increase the amount of cash available to feed children.

At present, primary schools get £2.30 per meal for every pupil in reception, year 1 and year 2. The figure, based on the mean cost of providing a meal in 2012, has to cover all of the costs of providing lunch every day of the school year, including routine staff and maintenance costs.

A report by the Education Policy Institute in February warned that increases in the cost of food will mean that schools could be footing a £109 million bill themselves by 2023-24 if the per-meal rate is not increased.

LACA has suggested a 10p rise, which would cost the government an additional £35 million a year.

Tim Blowers, the head of the Derbyshire county council's catering service and who chairs LACA, said school leaders and caterers alike are worried that funding "may soon be inadequate" as a result of inflation, the costs

of facility maintenance, increases in the minimum wage and rising food prices.

"LACA is also concerned that if funding does not take into account rising costs, this could have a detrimental effect on the quality of the meals provided as the number of meals will remain steady as ingredient costs go up. This could undermine both the feasibility and benefits of this policy, a point that we have raised with the Department for Education," he warned.

Micon Metcalfe, a fellow at the Institute of School Business Leadership, said rising prices do present an issue for schools, but caterers' demands for more cash should be taken with a pinch of salt.

"Food prices have gone up and so has the minimum wage, so actually it follows that what can be provided for £2.30 could be less. But obviously the catering firms are in it to make a profit too."

In some areas, schools are already having to subsidise the free meals service from their own budgets.



NEWS

TEACH FIRST: ONE IN THREE RECEPTION CHILDREN ARE NOT ‘SCHOOL READY’

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

Nearly one in three children who start primary school in England at the age of five are not “school ready”, according to new analysis by Teach First.

The education charity looked at the number of new reception pupils who fail to meet the level of social and emotional development, knowledge and skills needed to provide the foundation for good progress through school.

The figures vary dramatically between regions. As many as four in 10 children in Liverpool and Halton in the north-west are not considered ready. In comparison, two in 10 children are unready at age five in the London boroughs of Lewisham, Greenwich, and Richmond upon Thames.

Half a million families found out on whether their children had got a place at their chosen primary school this week.

School readiness is assessed when children start primary school and takes into account factors including children’s communication skills, their ability to listen or pay attention, and how they play and share with other children.

Teach First gathered the findings by analysing school readiness data from the Department for Education’s early-years foundation stage statistics for 2015 and 2017.

The research also showed that poorer children in every part of the country are more likely to start school behind their better-off peers.

Just under half of all children eligible for free school meals (FSM) are not school-ready by the time they start primary school, compared with just over a quarter of wealthier pupils.

In Halton, York, Leicestershire and Cumbria, this rose to just over half of FSM pupils starting primary without being school ready.

The school readiness gap between poorer and wealthier children was at its worst in York and the district of Bath and north-east Somerset. Some areas in London, such as Haringey, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, and Hackney, had almost no gap between pupils on FSM and their peers.

If gaps in school readiness are not addressed, inequalities can persist and grow throughout a child’s school life. Previous research by the Education Policy Institute in 2016 found that the school readiness gap at five years old explains 40 per cent of the attainment gap at the end of secondary school.

“All children start school with a different level of individual development, and that’s inevitable and normal. But it’s not right that whole groups of children are twice as likely to arrive at school behind, just because of where they were born,” said Russell Hobby, the chief executive of Teach First.

“There are lots of factors at play here, but we’re convinced that the biggest difference society can make is getting brilliant teachers into primary schools across the country. That’s particularly important in areas where poorer children are starting behind.”

Academy trusts must pause growth or ‘risk school improvement’

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

Chief executives at multi-academy trusts must stop and make changes as they develop or risk undermining their ability to improve schools sustainably, according to new research.

A report from education charity Ambition School Leadership has identified nine “breakpoints” for small and medium-sized trusts, related to issues including expansion and school improvement.

These are moments when particular approaches stop working as they should, and new methods are needed to deal with a trust’s future needs. Examples include changes to the CEO role, improvements to monitoring systems, and creating regional back office functions.

Breakpoints can pose “significant challenges” if a chief executive does not have a “coherent plan that brings together vision, strategy and operations and adapts as the MAT evolves”.

The research represents the first time anyone has comprehensively examined the inner workings of MATs, according to James Toop, the charity’s chief executive.

“Our research suggests that what works well for a trust with two or three schools won’t necessarily work for a trust with 10 or more. CEOs have to develop a coherent vision, strategy and operational model which they evolve as their MAT develops,” he said.

The research, conducted by education think tank LKMco, involved a survey of central team members at 22 MATs and in-depth phone interviews with trust chief executives.

Researchers used this information to



“formulate an overarching typology of MATs’ aims and visions, and identify ways in which MATs with different types of vision appeared to make particular strategic and operational decisions”.

Breakpoints as a result of growth

1. Accountability and oversight: Trusts need monitoring systems to continue oversight as the chief executive is no longer able to line manage all the schools.

2. Governance: The skills, expertise and membership of the board must evolve to keep pace with the scale, demands and challenges of the trust.

3. Alignment: Chief executives must decide if new schools which join the trust should adopt a trust-wide approach or retain autonomy. This includes ‘outstanding’ schools.

4. Communications: When the trust is too large to meet as a single group, new approaches must be identified to keep staff informed and feeling a part of the chain.

5. Role of the CEO: The chief executive must move from being executive head of all schools to adopting a more strategic and outward-facing CEO role, and appoint another leader to oversee school performance.

Break points linked to geography

6. Curriculum: Trusts that want to retain a curriculum that works in their local context must adapt as they move into different areas.

7. Central operations: As the trust expands, centralised back office functions may need to be regionalised.

8. Collaboration: As trusts move to new areas, initial face-to-face collaboration structures will need to adopt technology, change frequency or evolve.

Performance-related break points

9. School performance: Trusts may give more autonomy to high-performing schools to allow them to innovate, or take a more directive approach with under-performing schools.

Expert view, see p. 18

Northants council plunders £9m from its schools budget

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

A bankrupt county council siphoned off £9 million meant for school improvements in a desperate bid to prop up its depleted reserves, it has been revealed.

Northamptonshire county council hit the headlines in February after its bank balance plummeted so low that it was forced to bring in what’s called a Section 114 notice, banning all new spending.

But the revelation that it had diverted funding meant for schools towards other costs has prompted warnings that other authorities could do the same.

The council’s grip on its finances has since been the subject of several investigations, and the *Huffington Post* reported this week that it moved the £9 million into its general revenue account last year.

An external audit report by KPMG into the council’s finances in 2016-17 revealed in August last year that it had delved into its reserves in an attempt to keep afloat, including funds raised through “Section 106” payments from housing developers, which are meant to fund community projects and local services.

The report said “mitigations” made by the council included “£9 million of S106 developer contributions set aside to fund future educational improvements within the county”.

S106 agreements are legal obligations with developers which aim to balance out pressures created by new developments with improvements to the local area, and include a variety of infrastructure including schools.

According to the audit report, the £9 million will be “refinanced through council borrowing”.

A spokesperson for Northamptonshire county council insisted the *Huffington Post* story was incorrect until *Schools Week* provided a copy of the KPMG report.

She then claimed the council has governance measures in place to “ensure agreed investment for infrastructure is made in full and in a timely basis”. This covers both the council’s S106 obligations and its capital projects for schools.

Don Peebles, from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, warned that Northamptonshire “is ultimately unlikely to be a unique or isolated case”.

“The whole sector faces pressure owing to cuts, funding pressures and service

demands, and could face a £5 billion funding gap by 2020.

“It’s a task for the government to work with councils to ensure finances are sustainable, but it is also down to local authorities to keep a check on their medium term financial planning, to have in place robust governance and financial oversight, and also to heed the advice of outside experts.”

The Local Government Association is concerned that councils across the country are having to divert “ever-dwindling resources” from other local services in an attempt to plug “growing funding gaps in adult social care and children’s services”.

“Reserves are designed to help councils manage growing financial risks to local services and do nothing to address the systemic underfunding that they face,” a spokesperson said. “The size of the cuts councils are having to make is simply too big to be plugged by reserves.”

31.7 per cent of local authorities now see funding education and children’s services as their greatest immediate pressure, up from 6.8 per cent last year according to a report released by local democracy think-tank LGiU and *The Municipal Journal* in February.

ESFA fast-tracks teacher apprenticeship provider applications

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

Exclusive

Thirty-six teacher-training organisations have been approved to deliver apprenticeships after the Department for Education opened a secret application window just for them.

Seventeen academy trusts, 11 schools, three universities, three councils and two other organisations were given special treatment after a “disastrous” first attempt by the government to get teacher training providers registered, which saw only around a third pass the application process.

The list includes some big names from the academies community, including the Harris Federation, the Kemnal Academies Trust, White Horse Federation and Bright Futures Educational Trust.

South Farnham Educational Trust, headed up by government teacher training tsar Sir Andrew Carter, has also been approved to deliver apprenticeships as part of the latest tranche, approved outside the normal timetable so they can be ready to offer new teaching apprenticeships from September.

The new route into teaching, which will be a level six degree apprenticeship



Emma Hollis

open only to existing graduates, has been several years in the making.

Other employers and training companies have been denied the opportunity to join the government’s register of apprenticeship training providers since the third and most recent application window shut at the end of October, with results published in January.

However, the Education and Skills Funding Agency allowed for an “extenuating circumstance” and opened the register solely for initial teacher training organisations between February 28 and March 9.

A spokesperson for the ESFA claimed that the special window was opened to ensure there are enough accredited ITT providers in place to deliver the postgraduate teacher apprenticeship from September 2018.

The postgraduate teacher apprenticeship was only approved for delivery in October, at which point the ESFA started encouraging ITTs, particularly school-centred initial teacher training providers (SCITTs), to get on the register so they can deliver the standard from its launch date this September.

Emma Hollis, the executive director of the National Association of School-

Based Teacher Trainers, said the second application window was forced on the government because of a calamitous first attempt, during which it is understood around 60 ITTs applied but only 20 were approved.

In the build-up to this special round, the government offered webinars and training to ITTs on how to write their bids because the first time had been “such a train wreck”.

But this second attempt didn’t go as smoothly as hoped either, Hollis said. One unnamed SCITT, rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted, failed in its first attempt due to inadequate answers to two questions in its bid.

This provider worked with the Institute for Apprenticeships to improve, but failed at its second attempt as a result of its answer to a safeguarding question which it had passed in the first round and hadn’t made any changes to.

“You can’t make it up,” Hollis said. “I can’t see how apprenticeships are going to be successful as long as we are facing these kinds of unnecessary barriers.”

“We hope that the apprenticeship route will complement our successful Schools Direct and SCITT programmes and enable us to support more entrants into teaching,” said Heath Monk, the executive director of the Schools of King Edward VI in Birmingham, one of the organisations approved this week.

ITT PROVIDERS NEWLY APPROVED TO OFFER APPRENTICESHIPS
Goldsmiths’ College
Kirklees Metropolitan Council
Somerset County Council
Suffolk County Council
Thomas Telford School
University of York
University of Sussex
Sirius Academy West
Crispin School Academy
Runwell Community Primary School
Dove House School
Colchester County High School for Girls
Handsworth Wood Girls’ Academy
Merseyside, Cheshire & Greater Manchester Teacher Training Consortium
Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Oakthorpe Primary School
Bright Futures Educational Trust
The White Horse Federation
The Kemnal Academies Trust
North East Learning Trust
Henry Maynard Primary School
GLF Schools
South Farnham Educational Trust
Harris Federation
The Bourton Meadow Education Trust
Bedfordshire Schools Trust Limited
The Cam Academy Trust
The Gorse Academies Trust
Landau Forte Charitable Trust
East Midlands Education Trust
Teach Poole
Xavier Catholic Education Trust
Inspiring Futures Through Learning
The Sigma Trust
King Edward VI Academy Trust Birmingham
West Exe School

Ofqual won’t regulate private teacher-examiners despite cheating scandal

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

Ofqual will not limit the number of teacher-examiners at private schools, despite a wave of cheating allegations at some of the country’s most prestigious schools last summer.

The regulator has also decided not to introduce a “red alert” system to try and catch erroneous marks before they are released to students, and says it has no power to ask exam boards to lower the price of marking appeals in deprived areas.

Chief regulator Sally Collier has written to Robert Halfon, the chair of the parliamentary education committee, with responses to questions from a hearing last December.

In response to a question about whether a limit should be imposed on the number of teachers from independent schools that work as examiners, Collier said “the quality of assessment and the system as a whole is best served by involvement as senior examiners from teachers from the widest range of schools and colleges”.

Exam boards will be asked to “specifically track the proportions of their examiners coming from different schools” but Ofqual is not planning to put in place any further restrictions on who can be examiners based on what type of school they teach in, warning that the “quality” of exam papers could “suffer” otherwise.

Boards will also be expected to introduce a “significant package of safeguards which



Sally Collier

is stronger than those previously in place”, including ensuring teachers involved in the production of assessment materials do not know if or when the questions they have written will be used.

In March, Ofqual announced a consultation on reforms that might reduce the risk of cheating by teacher-examiners, including asking boards to check teaching plans, monitor social media and track “unusual exam results” and asking teacher examiners to make an “annual declaration” that they are complying with the rules.

Plans to stop teachers from helping write exams on subjects that they teach were first announced last December, amid a cheating storm at prestigious schools including Eton and Winchester College, where some pupils had their results nullified.

Collier also rejected red alerts to flag up any potentially erroneous GCSE and A-level results before they are released to students, saying it would not be “efficient or effective”



Robert Halfon

for boards to rely on predicted grades to spot marking errors, and said there were no plans to make the boards “take further steps in this area”.

In response to a question from the committee about whether there should be a deprivation-based approach for charging for reviews of marking, Collier claimed Ofqual lacks the power to require exam boards to set differentiated pricing for different groups of students, and added that exam boards had no plans to bring in such arrangements.

However, the change in rules to ensure that boards have to provide schools with exam scripts upon request by 2020 would help identify whether marking errors were to blame for a “disappointing” result. Pearson has already begun doing this, and schools using the service are submitting fewer requests for reviews, though a higher proportion of those they did submit were successful.

SOUTH WILTSHIRE IS THE SIXTH UTC RATED ‘INADEQUATE’

Another University Technical College has been rated ‘inadequate’, taking the total number of these specialist schools with Ofsted’s worst rating to six.

Following an inspection in mid-February, South Wiltshire UTC in Salisbury was told its leadership and management, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, outcomes for pupils and 16-to-19 study programmes were ‘inadequate’.

The quality of teaching is too variable because of staff absence, insufficient leadership and staff shortages in some subjects

Inspectors said expectations of what pupils can achieve are “not high enough”, and work does not challenge pupils of different abilities to realise their potential.

The curriculum at the UTC is not meeting pupils’ needs because it “lacks the flexibility required” and staffing issues exacerbated this.

Staff absence, insufficient leadership of teaching and staff shortages means the quality of teaching is “too variable”.

Ofsted also criticised the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs, who don’t do as well as their peers at the UTC. Additional funding is not helping to raise their achievement.

Absence is meanwhile too high for different groups of pupils.

Joe Mulligan, principal at South Wiltshire UTC, said the Ofsted grading was “disappointing for our students, parents and staff”, and said work has already begun to “systematically, robustly and rapidly address every issue identified by Ofsted”.

South Wiltshire UTC only opened in 2015. It currently has 215 pupils on roll, with capacity for 600.

The proportion of SEND pupils who need support at the UTC is much higher than average.

The report brings the total number of UTCs inspected so far to 30 and the number rated inadequate to six.

NEWS

Working 9 to 1? That’s no way to make a grading

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

Fewer people understand how GCSEs work since the new 9 to 1 grading system came in.

The exams regulator Ofqual has published the results of its annual survey on perceptions of A-levels, GCSEs and other qualifications in England.

The online study, conducted between October 24 and December 1 took opinions from almost 3,000 heads, teachers, parents, pupils, universities, employers and members of the public at large.

It aimed to assess respondents’ impressions of the exam system and their levels of confidence in GCSEs, AS and A-levels, and applied general qualifications.

Here are the main findings

1. Fewer people understand GCSEs

Last year’s survey found that 62 per cent of respondents felt GCSEs are well understood, compared with 70 per cent in 2016.

Last summer was the first time the new 9 to 1 grading system was used, in three exams: English language, English literature and maths.

The system will be applied to a wider range of subjects in the results issued in summer this year.

2. Pupils’ confidence in GCSEs and A-levels has decreased

Between 2016 and 2017, confidence in the exams remained stable for all stakeholder groups expect young people, whose confidence decreased for both GCSEs and AS/A-levels.

Fewer young people think GCSE standards were maintained in 2017 too, with the proportion falling from 46 per cent to 35 per cent.

3. Employers don’t get the new grades, but nor do some teachers

36 per cent of employers who responded to the survey are not aware that 9 is now the top GCSE grade.

23 per cent of employers said they thought 1 is the best GCSE grade that students can get now, while a further 13 per cent said they didn’t know at all.

Among parents, 16 per cent thought 1 is the top grade and 11 per cent do not know.

Even six per cent of teachers said they thought 1 was the highest grade at GCSE, though 100 per cent of heads got the question correct.

4. Confusion over malpractice

Nine in 10 teachers and heads know who to report an incident of malpractice to for GCSEs and AS/A levels

The majority of heads and teachers



(86 per cent) said they had adequate information about what constitutes malpractice, and 57 per cent of heads and teachers are confident malpractice is properly reported when it happens in GCSEs and AS/A-levels.

5. Not enough support for pupils needing extra help

Over a quarter of heads and teachers feel they don’t have enough information about how to support pupils who are eligible for special consideration.

Seventy-four per cent said they had adequate information about the arrangements that are available for a GCSE, AS, or A-level student who is eligible for

special consideration, meaning their marks or grade may be adjusted after the test to take into account illness, injury or some other event outside of their control.

6. Marking and moderation services lose their appeal

Less than half of survey respondents knew that services exist to manage appeals or queries about marking and moderation.

42 per cent are aware that there is a review of marking, moderation and appeals service for GCSE and AS/A-level results.

Of those aware of the service, 42 per cent agreed that the review of marking, moderation and appeals system was fair.

PLUGGING GAPS WITH THE PUPIL PREMIUM

Schools are increasingly using the pupil premium to plug funding gaps fuelled by real-terms spending cuts, new analysis by the Sutton Trust has revealed.

Thirty-four per cent of senior leaders admitted using it in this way, in a poll carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

According to the Sutton Trust’s analysis of the survey, this represents an increase on last year, when 30 per cent gave the same response.

At secondary level, 74 per cent of school leaders said their schools had been forced to cut teachers over the last year due to tight budgets, with a similar proportion saying the same about teaching assistants.

Staff cuts were lower at primaries, where 24 per cent of leaders said they had cut back on teachers, though 60 per cent said teaching assistants had fallen foul of funding shortages.

Another worrying finding showed that 48 per cent of senior leaders in secondary schools had limited subject choices at GCSE for financial reasons, while 43 per cent had reduced the options at A-level.

IT equipment was cut by 61 per cent of secondary school leaders and 44 per cent of primary leaders, while 46 per cent of primary leaders and 38 per cent of secondary leaders said their schools had foregone trips or outings.

Academy autonomy ‘has no positive impact in the classroom’

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

Almost half of academy leaders believe that the extra autonomy granted to academies has no positive impact in the classroom, according to new analysis by the Sutton Trust.

Thirty per cent of academy senior leaders who took part in a poll on the additional autonomy that comes from academy status said it had “no effect” at all in the classroom, while 18 per cent said it had a negative impact.

A further 10 per cent said they didn’t know what effect the autonomy of academy schools had in the classroom, according to a poll of 143 academy leaders carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

Academies have greater autonomy than other state-funded schools over the curriculum, school budgets, admissions and teachers’ pay.

But just 42 per cent of the academy leaders surveyed said the additional autonomy has a positive effect in their classrooms.

The proportion was even lower among classroom teachers. Twenty-one per cent of the 381 teachers surveyed thought additional autonomy had a positive impact in their classroom.

Among those who do see positives, freedom over the curriculum is the most popular advantage for both classroom teachers and senior leaders, at 56 per cent



and 67 per cent respectively.

This was followed by more control over allocation of resources (54 per cent and 63 per cent), then more freedom to decide programmes and approaches to learning (45 per cent and 60 per cent).

Just seven per cent of teachers and six per cent of leaders said academies’ freedom over teacher pay is a good thing.

Sir Peter Lampl, founder of the Sutton Trust and chairman of the Education Endowment Foundation, said the polling showed that many academy leaders are “sceptical about the benefits of their autonomy”.

“The focus should not be on school structures but on improving the quality of teaching in schools,” he said.

“The evidence from work by the Sutton Trust and by the Education Endowment

Foundation shows overwhelming that improving quality of teaching is the key to boosting standards for all pupils and disadvantaged pupils in particular.”

Among staff working in schools without academy status, only 10 per cent of senior leaders and seven per cent of teachers think the extra autonomy has a beneficial effect in the classroom.

The National Education Union has argued repeatedly for the government to reconsider its programme of academisation.

Kevin Courtney, the union’s joint general secretary, accused the government of pursuing “a reckless and evidence-free policy of academisation of schools” at the NUT section’s conference in Brighton on March 31.

“The NEU is demanding that schools are returned to their local authority family of schools,” he said. “This is the only way to restore the public service ethos in education, guarantee a high-quality education for all children and young people in England’s schools, and ensure the accountability and public probity that parents and communities are entitled to expect of their education service.”

The NFER polling was published to coincide with a Sutton Trust summit in New York, which was be attended by speakers including Justine Greening, the former education secretary, tackling topics such as the role of school structural reform and accountability.

NEWS

Is the DfE failing to prepare schools for the new data future?

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Exclusive

The Department for Education has acknowledged that more needs to be done to help schools prepare for strict new data protection laws, with just over a month left before they come into force.

Teachers and leaders have been complaining that the government has not properly briefed schools on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which come in to force on May 25.

Under the rules, schools will face fines if they are not clear about the data they hold on pupils or not quick enough in responding to requests for copies of personal data. Schools must also appoint a data protection officer to supervise the handling of data.

Complaints about a lack of adequate guidance have prompted the government to promise further information for schools on the GDPR, in the form of more guidance and "case studies". It is understood it will be published ahead of the May 25 deadline.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said he had asked the DfE "on several occasions" for more guidance.

"We are disappointed that the department has not been more proactive on this issue," he told *Schools Week*.

"ASCL has compiled and circulated a



factsheet to all our members, and we have run a series of seminars on this subject."

At the annual conference of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers earlier this month, members passed a motion demanding "succinct and accessible advice for schools" and extra funding for training and implementation. Delegates warned that schools are forking out millions of pounds to private companies and local councils for help with the new regulations.

In Essex, the county council has even launched a service offering "information audits" for £750 per primary and £1,000 per secondary school. For a fee of £1,500 a year, the council will also provide schools with a data protection officer.

Robin Bevan, headteacher at Southend

High School for Boys, warned that many schools are paying at least £200 to train staff to deal with the regulations because the DfE has not published enough guidance.

"It all seems quite small-scale, until you do that calculation: with 20,000 schools at £200 a time, suddenly £4 million of public money has been spent simply because the DfE failed to publish a simple booklet of advice for schools."

Jeff Fair, the business manager at Brentwood County High School, said the regulations have "far-reaching consequences" for schools, but that adequate guidance was not available.

When he searched for school-specific advice, he only found a six-minute video hosted on the Information Commissioner's

Office website.

"I could find no other advice for schools as to how they actually implement the policy," he went on. "When I search the DfE website, no draft education-specific protocols, no notification documents, nothing else."

Although there is no official guidance for schools on the DfE's homepage, the department has published several posts on its Teaching Blog, and claims to have promoted the posts via social media and through teaching unions.

There have also been speaking engagements and guidance "encouraging system suppliers to be pro-active in helping schools", a spokesperson claimed.

"We are working with a number of schools and other sector representatives to develop further guidance and case studies to help schools prepare for the introduction of the upcoming legislation."

Last month, it emerged that half of schools were not yet ready to meet their legal duty to appoint a data protection officer. Research from The Key, seen exclusively by *Schools Week*, found that of 1,032 school leaders who responded to a survey, 50 per cent said they had not decided who would take on the role.

Fergal Roche, chief executive of The Key, said many schools are struggling with practical and legal issues surrounding the new role, especially at a time of financial pressures.

DfE property company considers onsite housing for teachers

ALIX ROBERTSON
@ALIXROBERTSON4

The government-backed company tasked with buying sites for new schools is looking at providing housing for teachers in new developments, its chief executive has revealed.

Lara Newman told an event in London this week that the property company is "in the very early stages" of developing onsite housing for teachers at schools in some areas, though there are "challenges".

LocatED was established last year to find locations for new free schools and help create 600,000 new school places by 2021.

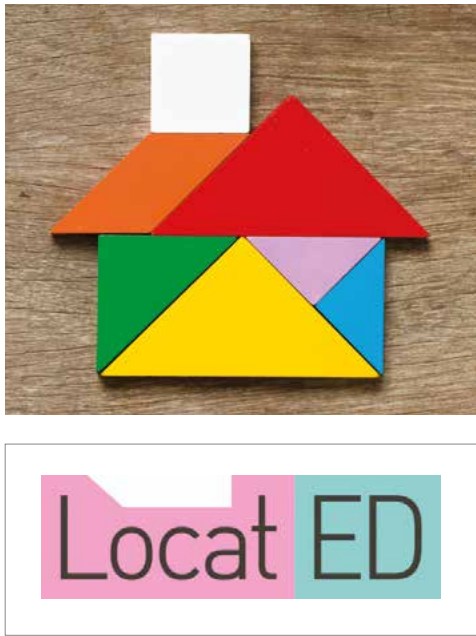
It has bought 50 sites in the last year and has 70 purchases in the pipeline, equating to 21,000 new school places.

"We're looking at how we can deliver housing on school sites, including teacher housing where there's a recruitment problem, which I fully appreciate is not everywhere," Newman said.

LocatED will be exploring the idea of offering staff accommodation onsite as part of mixed-use developments.

"It doesn't work everywhere, it is a big thing in London," Newman said. "Some multi academy trusts want teachers to be able to get onto the housing ladder but then you've got challenges around what happens when those guys then move schools and you've got them living on your site?"

"There are a load of challenges that we're working through at the moment with some housing associations and some people like



Homes England [the government agency responsible for building more homes] to figure out how we can make that work for everyone."

Andrew Morris, the assistant general secretary for pay, conditions and bargaining at the National Education Union, said the NEU would support the idea as an incentive to teach.

"We support the provision of housing for teachers as one of a range of measures to help teachers find somewhere affordable to live, while recognising there are some detailed points that need to be solved, and we are confident that minor obstacles can be overcome," he said.

In October last year *Schools Week* reported that the Harris Federation, one of the largest multi academy trusts, was planning to use surplus land to build up to 100 homes in partnership with a housing association, in a bid to stop teachers being priced out of London.

The housing could be rented to Harris teachers at a reduced cost, with the rent going towards maintenance. Harris said the building work should "hopefully" begin in early 2019.

Schools Week followed up on the initiative this week.

"We have had a number of meetings with LocatED and the DfE already to progress this initiative," said Dan Moynihan, the chief executive of Harris.

"London is an expensive city for key workers like teachers and we see this as a sensible step in helping us to recruit and retain the best teaching talent in London for students at our academies."

In Wantage, Oxfordshire, a religious group known as the Community of St Mary the Virgin has opened six new one-bedroom flats this month reserved for newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

The flats will be let at affordable prices to NQTs who take up posts in the area.

"Many teachers at schools in Oxfordshire are finding accommodation costs excessive. We believe that these new flats are a positive and innovative step forward," said David Locke, chief operating officer of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust.

MASSIVE 50-SCHOOL MAT HAS £300M CAPITAL FUNDING GAP

One of the country's largest academy trusts is facing a £302 million shortfall in its maintenance budget.

Andy Simpson, Oasis Community Learning's national director of services, property and estates, said there is currently "no solution" to the gap in capital funding for the repair of aging buildings at its 50 schools.

"We've got a £302 million hole. Those schools will close unless there is a government solution," he said at a Westminster Education Forum seminar this week. "I think we should all call for the right investment."

He referred to figures from a 2017 National Audit Office report, which found it would cost £6.7 billion to return all school buildings to satisfactory or better condition.

"Most of our children are in aging buildings, this is a £7 billion hole," he continued.

"The level of capital investment which falls beyond the priorities renewal programme is wholly insignificant, and therefore the ticking time bomb exists across the estate."

Oasis Community Learning told *Schools Week* that despite the funding gap, "robust financial planning" means none of its academies are "under threat of closure".

The trust is working with the Department for Education "to find sustainable solutions", a spokesperson said.

"We have a duty to understand the capital condition of our buildings, and where our highest priority challenges are, to ensure we best manage the 125-year tenures we are responsible for."

I've maxed out the company credit card,
and I've only got a few pence...
time for an economy drive.



EDITORIAL

And the academy award for tardiness goes to...



So the Department for Education is about as speedy at converting schools in special measures as it is at, say, publishing the results of white paper consultations. We already knew it was slow – all those private finance initiatives – but we didn't know how hard some local authorities and regional schools commissioners find it to convert literally any on time.

The National Audit Office let slip the government's golden goal of nine months: it's seems a little over-ambitious. Of course, the local authority, RSC or any nearby headteachers often do such a sterling job supporting the school, that the actual wait to become an academy is pretty much academic anyway. It's basically an academy, getting access to local expertise and embarking on a new era, isn't it?

But that's the point: if it's altogether academic, it's not clear why these schools are being converted at all. The most interesting thing our investigation shows is LA-run schools are being graded 'inadequate' and then, in the words of one council, waiting for a saviour trust "so long" many actually come out of special measures.

This raises a very serious question around evidence for the academy army. Isn't it the fact of being put in special measures that prompts schools to get better – not academising? The headteacher will often be removed, or receive an enormous incentive to make changes quickly. The local authority or RSC will broker support in. So is it Ofsted, not academisation, which is the real force for change here?

There's a very interesting piece of legislation in the Education and Adoption Act 2016, which gives the secretary of state the specific power to revoke an academy order in case a school closes instead of becomes an academy. Why not have a rule that says academy orders can be lifted in the absence of a suitable sponsor and if the school begins to improve? One school we found even became 'outstanding' about a year after it had plunged into special measures, but still converted.

Of course, if the school wants to that's different. But until the government finds more sponsors, academy orders should be able to be lifted.

A welcome respite – but don't get too comfortable

For once, budget cuts have caused a sigh of relief rather than a howl of anguish. This week Ofsted admitted to *Schools Week* with admirable transparency that it's trying to save £2.3 million by allowing more time between inspections of schools that are 'good', 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. Given that 'outstanding' schools already have indefinite leave not to be reinspected, these more generous timeframes are a bit of a boon for schools. Improvements take time, they say – quite rightly.

However, the fact a school with "serious weaknesses" (a school that's 'inadequate' but whose leaders have shown capacity to improve) may go unchecked by inspectors for a whole extra year could be damaging. Shouldn't Ofsted check that such a school "on its way to removing special measures"? It needs to be made clearer when this role has been handed to the regional schools commissioner, so schools in the toughest circumstances aren't left floundering just because Ofsted needs to save some cash.

This wasn't what they had in mind when they said "data protection"

As Jeff Fair said at the ATL conference last week, the new GDPR data protection rules have "far-reaching consequences" for schools.

Given that schools that breach the rules will be in for a hefty fine, you'd be forgiven for assuming there would be a deluge of information for schools on the Department for Education's website, instructing them on how to meet their new duties.

But a few posts on a gov.uk teaching

blog and a video hosted by the Information Commissioner's Office does not constitute proper guidance, without which schools are in the dark.

It's no wonder commercial companies and councils have been able to cash in. Some leaders are having to shell out hundreds of pounds for advice that could have been given by the department itself.

GDPR is no joke, but the DfE's readiness for it certainly is.

“We need an inspirational Executive Head Teacher, to support and compliment leadership throughout our exciting and expanding Multi Academy Trust – Excelsior!”

Hazel Pulley NLE, CEO



APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE HEAD

**EXCELSIOR MULTI ACADEMY TRUST
LEADERSHIP SCALE 35 (£90,773) – 37 (£95,333)**

Within Excelsior Multi Academy Trust, amazing teachers change lives. Our academies help prepare precious young people for happy, healthy, successful futures through the magic of learning.

Excelsior Multi Academy Trust presently comprises of Parkfield Community School and Turves Green Primary School. Green Meadow Primary School is due to join the Trust in June 2018 and a further school by January 2019. It is expected that other schools will join the MAT in the near future, and a Free School application is in the pipeline.

Excelsior's main aims are to provide:

- outstanding education through our values of equality, aspiration and innovation.
- outstanding leadership and well trained and motivated staff, who will improve our pupils' outcomes in an exciting learning environment.
- a broad, balanced and exciting innovative curriculum of opportunity, including STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, emanating from our own Young Engineers' Academy and Mathematic's Academy.
- opportunities for pupils to develop resilience, compassion and respect for all.
- a whole school growth mindset, ensuring all who learn and work in Excelsior aim high.

Core purpose of the role

The Executive Head is a lead professional and a significant role model within the wide sphere of influence within the Excelsior Multi Academy Trust (MAT). Through proactively promoting and demonstrating Excelsior's vision and values of respecting cultural diversity within contemporary Britain, respect for diversity will be modelled. The values and ambitions displayed will also help to determine the achievement of academies and their pupils, as well as

ensuring high expectations and aspirations are there for all – staff, students, governors and communities.

The Executive Head is accountable for ensuring the educational success of the primary academies, particularly in diminishing disadvantage, within the overall framework of the MAT's approach to school improvement as well as the individual academy's strategic plans. The Executive Head is responsible for providing support and challenge to each academy's Headteacher/Head of School and Local Governing Body across all aspects of their work. This will involve creating a culture of improvement through the Executive Headteacher's aspirational leadership and commitment to the highest levels of achievement for all across the MAT. The Executive Head will have line management responsibilities for the Headteacher/Head of School working closely with the Local Governing Body.

The Executive Head is responsible for leading and promoting the Excelsior brand through social media and marketing. The Trust team will support this drive throughout their individual responsibilities and duties.

Visits to our Outstanding lead school to meet the CEO and Excelsior Team are welcomed and encouraged.

**Please contact Nicola Harrold – Trust HR Lead –
n.harrold@excelsiormat.co.uk**

**Excelsior MAT
Parkfield Community School
Parkfield Road
Birmingham
B8 3AX
Tel.: 0121 464 1131**

To Apply

Please visit <https://www.educationweekjobs.co.uk/> to download the application form. Once completed, please send to n.harrold@excelsiormat.co.uk.

CLOSING DATE: FRIDAY 11TH MAY 2018

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CASTLE MEAD
ACADEMY

Principal

Salary: Attractive

Castle Mead Academy will be a new 11-16 school in the heart of Leicester, forming part of the successful and growing Rushey Mead Educational Trust (RMET). Opening in September 2019, the new academy will (at capacity) provide 1200 places within a new purpose built learning environment and provide a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum with a special focus on EBacc subjects.

The RMET commitment to academic excellence and pastoral care is well known, and the academy will follow in the format and success of the 'Outstanding' Rushey Mead Academy. Working in true collaboration with the Leicester Teaching School Alliance and our partner schools, Castle Mead Academy will quickly equip itself with a reputation for excellence, ensuring every pupil can achieve.

We have developed 7 guiding principles that all our schools share: Challenge; Collaboration; Culture; Creativity; Community; Courage and Character. It is these principles that will shape Castle Mead Academy, growing a community of excellence for all.

There is no fixed view on the type of person that will be best placed to lead Castle Mead Academy successfully forward, beyond the alignment of principles and values

that we as a collective share. You will obviously have strong experience of working as a senior leader within a school environment, alongside evidence of delivering exceptional outcomes for pupils - but where you are on your personal career path isn't set.

Few school leaders are afforded the opportunity to shape and build a new school. It is a learning legacy that will last for generations. It will also be a considerable challenge and the successful delivery of any project of this scale requires exceptional team work. Upholding the RMET mission that "together we make a positive difference" the support, capacity and guidance you will receive throughout this journey will be unparalleled.

In joining Rushey Mead Educational Trust, you will find likeminded, talented colleagues that are passionate about ensuring all children, regardless of circumstance, have access to the very best educational opportunities.

To find out more or to apply for this career defining opportunity, visit: rmtrust.our-careers.co.uk or call **Phil Watt** or **Adam Brett** at Propelo on **01904 567818** for a confidential conversation.



Deputy Headteacher

Full Time - Permanent

Salary: Highly competitive based on skills and experience (L12 – L19)



This is an exciting stage in the school's development as we have just embarked on a journey to become one of the most improved schools in the country.

This post is an excellent opportunity to work alongside our forward-thinking headteacher who is leading our school on a transformational journey. We have been graded as 'good' in all areas by Ofsted (June 2016) and pupils are beginning to make rapid progress in our purposeful and happy environment. However, we are not complacent. In September 2017, we developed and launched a pioneering reading programme, implemented a specialist teacher model and we introduced 20% release time for all class teachers. There are still a number of innovative initiatives in the pipeline, including Weekly Incremental Coaching and a full writing and wider curriculum review!

We are looking for:

- an ambitious, committed and dynamic leader to join a highly effective Senior Leadership Team
- a leader who will strategically steer curriculum design, teaching, learning and staff development
- a person who models and demands high expectations in all areas of the school from pupils and staff alike
- a leader with varied experience (different phases and school types)
- somebody ready and willing to deputise for the headteacher when required

In return, we offer the opportunity to:

- work alongside an ambitious headteacher
- work closely with a senior team that will provide vision, direction and strong moral purpose
- engage with a Governing Body, staff, pupils and parents who are incredibly aligned, dedicated and

passionate about our school community's potential to achieve remarkable things

- make a real contribution on the future of our school (particularly in curriculum design and delivery)
- a parent community with high aspirations and children with exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning
- work in a well-resourced school on an impressive site, which includes; multiple playgrounds, a school field and dedicated classrooms for music, art and DT, food technology as well as a library, two computing suites and multiple small group rooms
- rapidly develop your own leadership skills and undertake national professional qualifications such as NPQH

This role has arisen following the promotion of our deputy headteacher to headteacher. The position is non-class based, although is likely to include some teaching commitment.

We would very much like to hear from you if you share our vision, values and enthusiasm!

The application pack and form are available from the school website:

www.roxbourneprimaryschool.co.uk/vacancies-1. Candidates are warmly invited to visit our school.

To arrange a visit, for a confidential discussion or for any technical queries please contact the headteacher's PA on **0208 422 9207** or via email: admin@roxbourne.harrow.sch.uk

Closing Date: Wednesday 25th April 2018 at 09:00

Shortlisting: Wednesday 25th April 2018

Recruitment Day: Tuesday 1st May 2018

Start Date: September 2018 or earlier if available sooner.



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With our newest primary and secondary cohorts starting in September 2018, we will be growing our academy team by appointing a number of qualified primary and secondary teachers across a range of departments and specialisms. Full details can be found on our website.

Why work at Harris Academy Tottenham?

- "Teachers have high aspirations. Their enthusiasm for their subject is infectious, and this motivates pupils to want to achieve well." OFSTED - 2017
- A calm, well-disciplined yet positive and innovative learning environment
- Excellent facilities and resources for all colleagues and students
- Superb professional development, including a thorough induction programme, ensuring you are always at the forefront of teaching and learning innovation.

This is an exciting opportunity to be part of a highly experienced and collaborative team who are providing exceptional outcomes for students from 3-18 years of age. We are interested to hear from experienced teachers, and those looking for their first role as an NQT.

Discover more at www.harriscareers.org.uk



READERS' REPLY

Reply of the week
receives a
Schools Week mug!



CEOs at tiny academy trusts paid more than big-chain bosses

Catriona Booth
Set in the context of school cuts, plus 4,000 children with SEND and no school place, this is shameful.

Troops to Teachers: Quarter of all trainees quit course without qualifying

Si Faz
Although I do understand the logic behind giving bursaries to attract people into teaching, why is there never a financial reward for those of us who stick with it? I qualified in 2012, and I see graduates, fresh out of university, with little to no life experience, getting £25,000 per year, tax free, and then leaving the profession after a year, maybe two at best, while I get no reward. By that I mean a tax-free retention bonus, say after five or 10 years of teaching! Perhaps all this money would be better spent as an incentive to stay in the job, rather than training in a job and leaving once qualified!

Colin Grimes // @MrGPrimary
I think a comparable dropout rate to all ITT. Shame that's not being reported though. Much better just to trash this scheme that's produced some great teachers.

Rich n Famous // @richnfamous76
I'm not surprised. Anyone with a background based around discipline and respect is going to be taken aback by the poor behaviour and rudeness that has come to

typify the modern classroom. I was only in the boys' brigade and I struggle!

One in three reception children aren't 'school ready', warns Teach First

Jane Cross // @BehaviourA
This seems such a bizarre statement. Isn't it more a case of schools not offering what children need developmentally if the proportion is so high?

Lizzie Smith // @MadgiePodge
Because they are too little! Start formal schooling at seven, like other rational countries who value childhood.

How can schools meet the Gatsby career benchmarks?

Stephen Foster // @MrSRFoster
So after successive governments have run down the careers service and produced a curriculum that reduces opportunity to carry out such work, they hit schools with this.

Fixing the madness of the May transfer window

Chris Mallaband // @CMallaband
Have oscillated on this one for years. I think the best way now would be standard notice periods and allow teachers to negotiate start dates with new and existing employers. Many academy chains are starting to use unreasonably long notice periods though.

CEOs at tiny academy trusts paid more than big-chain bosses

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Mark Watson, Gloucestershire

Now this really is an area that needs proper investigation, transparency and exposure and congratulations to *Schools Week* for shining the light. For MATs with two schools, the title of CEO is pure semantics, and only there because the DfE requires someone to be labelled as such – there is no CEO role, at most you're looking at an executive headteacher. These are the trusts which need to really be held to account. As a generalised comment their boards are less likely to be as competent and professional as the larger MATs, and therefore there is a much greater risk of the individual who is CEO running the show.

What if the reason a secondary school had a poor progress rate was not due to its own teaching, but because the pupils arrived with overinflated results from primary school? Researchers at the number-crunching powerhouse Education Datalab believe this theory holds true, after they looked at secondary schools that took pupils from 30 different primary schools with suspiciously high key stage 2 SATs scores.

The calculations to figure this out are relatively simple. Taking one secondary with a low overall Progress 8 score, Datalab separated out the average progress score for pupils from each of its feeder schools. Pupils from most schools had the same rate of progress. But one school stood out: on average, each pupil that attended "Primary School H" received two grades lower at GCSE than expected given their key stage 2 scores, a pattern that repeated in 2015 and 2016.

And when they looked across the country they found more. In total, 30 primary schools had their pupils go on to achieve an average one grade lower on every GCSE, and not due to issues with the secondary schools, as Datalab controlled for that. It is simply that pupils in these 30 schools, for whatever reason, do extremely well in their SATs exams and then bomb at secondary.

As I see it, there are three plausible theories. One, Primary School H straight-up cheated: it hired in scribes, pointed answers, amended papers and so on. If this sounds outlandish then it's worth remembering that



LAURA MCINERNEY

Contributing editor, *Schools Week*

Cheating at SATs: Primary schools aren't only hurting themselves

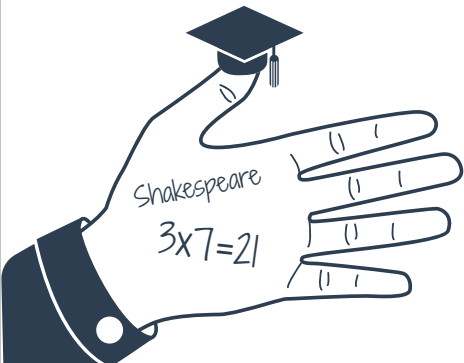
a Teacher Tapp survey in November revealed that eight per cent of teachers said they had been asked to point out incorrect answers to children and 11 per cent had been asked to give a child undocumented additional support on reading or writing.

Theory two: the school didn't cheat but it worked incredibly hard, week after week, drilling pupils until they could all pass their exams with flying colours. Unfortunately, in doing so, this left the pupils with little ability to learn anything else and when they got to secondary school they were overwhelmed with the range of subjects and independent learning and so fell apart.

Or, theory three: something about pupils in these schools made teachers at secondary school respond to them less well. Maybe the

pupils were all of a particular race, and then went into racist secondary schools. Maybe their swottiness was disliked by teachers in their new school?

Honestly, this last theory is the weakest. It may cover the odd one or two among the 30,



but I can't see it holding for them all. Which leaves us with cheating or overpreparing. And that's awkward, not only because those SATs results might well have determined which set pupils were put into (around 60 per cent of schools use SAT scores for setting), but also because it shows how precarious the progress measure for any one school really is. One unethical feeder school and – pow! – you're done. On the other hand, I wondered if any primary schools out there had taken a hit on lowering their scores to unfairly help a secondary school have an advantage in its progress measures. Apparently not. The cleverbods at Datalab tested and found precisely zero primary schools where pupils went on to make an extra grade for each GCSE subject compared to expectations. When it comes to SATs manipulation, it appears the force only drives in one direction. Datalab's report ends by noting that the Department for Education and Ofsted might wish to remove the results of pupils from anomalous primary schools before judging the progress measures of a secondary school. It's an idea both will take into consideration. But, more importantly, this must surely now trigger exam-day monitoring from the Standards and Testing Agency, and begin a series of other checks to ensure these schools, many of which will have been rated 'outstanding' a long time ago and left without further monitoring, are adequately preparing their pupils for the future.

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THE INTERVIEW

HAS OFSTED GIVEN UP DOI

CATH MURRAY
@CATHMURRAY_

Sean Hartford, national director for education, Ofsted

Ofsted's case studies have not always had their intended consequences. As Sean Hartford said at the recent 'Radical ideas to transform Ofsted' conference at the UCL Institute for Education: "When Ofsted tries to nudge something, it often becomes a shove."

A famous example is triple marking. When the inspectorate published the case study of a school using an innovative method of pupil feedback, it caused a nationwide mania for marking with different coloured pens, notoriously piling additional work onto already hard-pressed teachers.

So Ofsted pulled back on case studies. Then last December, there was 'Bold beginnings' – a study of practice in the reception classes of 41 primary schools, which irked many and led to accusations that Ofsted is picking and choosing "good practice" case studies according to its own bias.

After the conference, we caught up with a man who spends much of his time engaging with the schools community, trying to repair the damage caused by the triple marking case study and others, and asked whether Ofsted really has ditched the practice for good.

CM: Is there a case for publishing examples of good practice in schools?

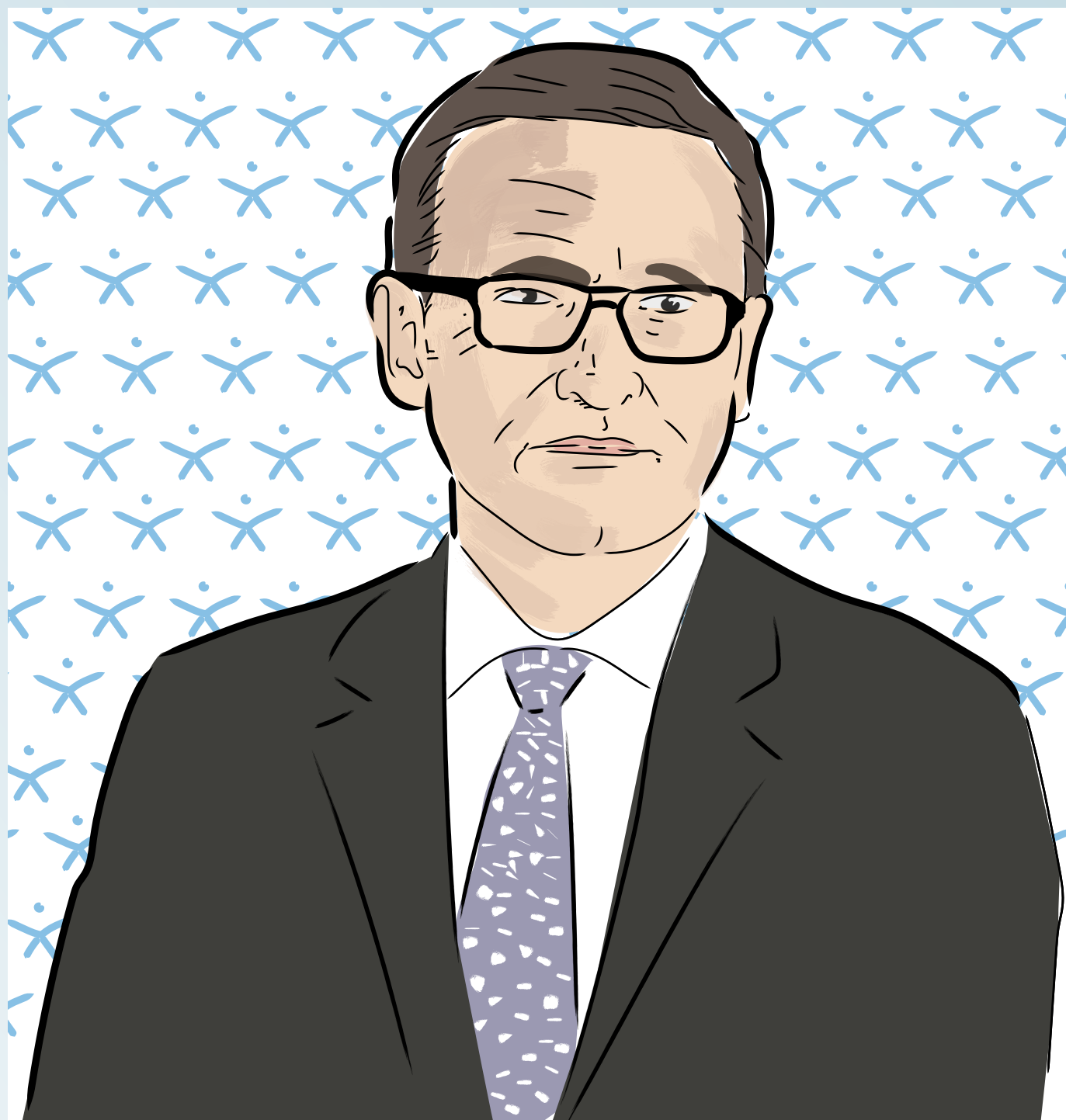
SH: Case studies have got us into problems in the past. The marking case study – that's where triple marking came from, that and Dylan William and Paul Black with *Inside the black box*. Coupled together, they were like blue touchpaper – it got all the schools doing triple marking. So case studies are good in some respects, but schools and colleges have got to realise that what works in one place might not work in another.

I always go back to the marking example. The inspector went into that school and saw a great school, which identified that one of the key things they'd done since the previous inspection was to change their marking system. It was about dialogue between teachers and pupils – and people writing in different coloured pens, literally.

They identified it as something that was really working for them. We sent an inspector along, who spent half a day there, discussed it, wrote it all up, published it... and then we know what happened.

The problem is of course that the school was probably managing other parts of the teachers' workload in such a way as to carve out time, because in their context it worked: the teachers weren't dying from exhaustion – they were doing great teaching and planning; they were doing everything really well and this was part of it.

But drop it on 2,000 to 3,000 schools that haven't got those other things in place, and it's a disaster. So we can't just assume that we can take these things and plonk them in another place and



they will work as well, or even that they won't be detrimental.

CM: Does that mean you don't use case studies anymore?

SH: We haven't published one for a fair time now, and we took down the ones that we had on the website, because we wanted to sit back and think about and how they're used whether it's the right thing to do. We haven't resolved that, as it's a resource issue as well, to go and do the extra visits. So we haven't done them for a while, and we haven't published them for a while.

CM: So you haven't yet come to a policy on it?

SH: It's something we will consider as we do our new framework.

CM: As for last December's 'Bold beginnings' report on the reception year, some of the complaints felt you'd taken too small a sample size, basically like an enlarged case study.

SH: I'm sure people told you about this, but the reality was, we had a data trawl that yielded about 150 schools – after a first trawl that yielded very small numbers, about six schools, so the criteria we were setting were really too stringent. We widened those criteria, including where those schools were in terms of IDACI [the income deprivation affecting children index], and we ended up with about 150.

Then we looked at the schools and said "well, that number have just had inspection in the last year; it's unfair to go back to them. These ones, we know we're going to in the next year or 18 months. It'd be unfair to go to them". This left us with about 50, and we dropped some of them for

NG CASE STUDIES?

"Bold beginnings was 41 schools, first-hand experience. Doctorates are written on talking to five teachers"

different reasons. That's why we ended up with 41.

The key to this argument is the way they were identified. We hadn't gone into these schools; we didn't know what they were like. We just knew that they met our criteria. And the main criterion was: are they doing really well by the disadvantaged children?

CM: How did you measure that?

SH: It was over time, what had they done with their key stage 1 and key stage 2 results, their phonics screen check scores, and so on.

CM: So from entry to key stage 2 results.

SH: Not entry. We did it from KS1 results, progress from KS1 to 2, KS2 results, and phonics screen checks. Then we looked at the difference between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers, and we went to schools where there was very little difference, or the disadvantaged children did better in some places, or were on a par.

And so we said "let's try and get underneath what these schools are doing that means that their disadvantaged children are basically doing as well. It matters not when you go to the school if they're disadvantaged or not."

CM: If you are looking at how children have performed throughout primary school, can you say that it's good practice in the reception year that makes the difference?

SH: You're right, there's no absolute causal effect. There is correlation, clearly. But we said "okay, let's go see what they're doing. They seem to, over the time that the kids are at the school, be doing really well by the disadvantaged kids. Let's have a look what they do."

CM: In that first year?

SH: Yes. A lot of the pushback against 'Bold beginnings' was actually from people who don't teach in reception, but who teach preschool, and we didn't go into preschools.

CM: But even from reception experts, I hear that if you start kids on phonics and writing too

early, research says that by 11, they're actually disadvantaged.

SH: But it's contested both ways. What we wanted to see is what these schools are doing from the start.

CM: But by making the recommendations, are you not attributing causality that doesn't exist?

SH: Well, we're saying that with a professional eye on experience, we've put early-years experts from our inspectorate into those schools, and they looked at certain things and reported back. We really need to look at the report recommendations, because they're really not the recommendations that a lot of people say they are.

We were saying "there is something in this, this is what these places are doing". And they were making sure that reading was at the heart of reception.

CM: But did you know other schools weren't doing that?

SH: No, we don't know. And actually, if a school says "yes, we do that", well, what's the problem?

CM: But what if all the schools that are getting bad results are doing that too? Therefore, there's no correlation.

SH: That could be true.

CM: It could easily be true.

SH: Not easily. It could be true. It's unlikely that all the bad schools are doing the same things at these places. But, I mean, there's a chance.

CM: So, what were you doing? Pulling out all the threads that these schools all have in common?

SH: Yes, exactly. So putting reading at the heart of reception. Rhymes, reading to children really frequently, kids learning rhymes by heart, and getting phonics in.

CM: But maybe all those kids are all drinking a certain water in their local area, or they're all having a banana for breakfast.

SH: Welcome to educational research!

CM: If you're recommending something, you have a responsibility to make sure it's a rigorous process.

SH: It was a rigorous process. Some people said that 41 isn't a very large sample. You go and talk to these researchers in this building [the UCL Institute of Education]. Going to 41 schools, actually, for first-hand evidence, is a pretty large sample. Daniel Muijs, who's with us at Ofsted now [as head of research], was professor of education at Southampton. He asked "what is the question here?"

It was 41 schools, first-hand experience. Doctorates are written on talking to five teachers.

CM: That's true.

SH: So where does this come from? Piaget did his work with three children, and it influenced education for 100 years.

CM: People's worry is that you find evidence that supports what you already believe. That's the danger with case studies, isn't it?

SH: That isn't what we did, but that could be levelled at every single piece of research. I guarantee you can go and look at the research journals from this place, and their positionality statement will tell you exactly where this research is going. So I don't think it's any different.

CM: So in your mind, 'Bold beginnings' is different from a case study. That would be a one-school report.

SH: A one-off, exactly. And where I think we've made our mistake in the past is to say "look at what that single school is doing with this method, in that case of marking". With hindsight, we should not have done it. But then, with hindsight, Paul Black and Dylan William might not have written *Inside the Black Box* if they knew that a government was going to pick it up and brand it as assessment for learning and stick it in national strategies.

When I spoke to Paul at the time, he said it was being implemented right. Well, 20 years on, has it been implemented right? Does Dylan think it's been implemented right? I think he's rowing back and saying "oh well, what we really meant was..."



Chair, the National Association of Virtual School Heads

SALLY
KELLY

Virtual schools do vital work, so let's not overwhelm them

Guidance for virtual school heads was updated recently to expand their statutory duties to include previously looked-after children. Sally Kelly welcomes the changes, but warns of mission creep and funding shortfalls

I have been a virtual school head (VSH) for seven years now. This revelation used to draw strange looks, but most people, especially in schools and education circles, now have an idea of what I do. The essence of the role is to promote the educational achievement of all the children looked after by their local authority (LA). The role became statutory in 2014 and since then we have started to see some consistency emerging across LAs, and real impact in terms of outcomes for looked-after children.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 was followed by new statutory guidance for both schools and LAs on promoting education for previously looked-after children. Issued in February this year, the guidance brings welcome changes – many of which the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) already considers best practice.

There is more clarity about how to spend the pupil premium plus for maximum impact. It also addresses the high numbers of children with special educational needs or mental health difficulties and lays out expectations for how VSHs and designated teachers in schools must work together to champion these children and ensure they receive the right support.

The most significant change is that we are now to “promote education for children who are no longer looked-after because they are now adopted, on a special guardianship order, or a child arrangement order”.

In many ways, the extension of this role makes complete sense. After all, these children were in care; their early trauma doesn't go away because they are adopted. Adopted children do better than children in care at the end of key stage 4, but they still lag well behind the general population. In 2017, 32.8 per cent of previously looked-after children achieved a pass in English and maths, compared with 58.9 per cent of the general population and 17.5 per cent of the looked-after population. So they do need extra support and the people already supporting the children currently in care are the best qualified to do so.

In some aspects, the guidance is easy to deliver. Ensure school professionals have

training on attachment and trauma? Tick. Ensure these children receive admissions priority? Tick. We are already doing these.

However, VSHs are raising concerns. The first is on expectations. The guidance specifies that we are not corporate parents for these children, but are required to provide advice and guidance to their parents, carers and professionals that work with them. But expectations are running high; VSHs will need consistency across the country, both in terms of the support they receive for their expanded role, and what new services LAs agree to provide.

“Cuts elsewhere with high-needs funding and to school budgets mean that VSHs are under increasing pressure

The other difficulty is, of course, funding. My team is already receiving a huge increase in requests for support and guidance from schools, social workers and parents and carers, putting extra workload on an already strained service. Cuts elsewhere with high-needs funding and to school budgets already mean that VSHs are under increasing pressure. The Department for Education has announced £7.6 million for LAs to support the expansion of the VSH role. The changes come into force in September, and we will need to know when we get this funding.

The final worry is “mission creep”. The VSH model is successful. Children in need did only slightly better than looked-after children – 19.1 per cent scored a GCSE grade 4 or better English and Maths compared with 17.5%. Will they be the next group that we are asked to champion? This is a real concern, and many VSHs worry that what we do will be watered down if we don't have the budget or the guidance to ensure consistency across boroughs.

NAVSH welcomes the new guidance but we are going to need to do some work to ensure that it can be enacted effectively by our members.



CEO, Ambition School Leadership

JAMES
TOOP

Coherence is the secret ingredient to MAT success

There are lots of ways MATs can improve their schools, writes James Toop, but there's one common factor underpinning it all

School improvement can only occur with great leadership. This is especially true when we are talking about groups of schools like multi-academy trusts, but the more I learn about the MATs that are turning around schools and changing children's lives, the more I'm convinced it can be summarised by one word: “coherence”.

As the head of a leadership development charity I am lucky to meet a lot of school leaders. The MAT CEOs I talk to often ask me where they can find the answers to running an effective academy trust. The answer, of course, always begins with, “Well, it's complicated...”

But after spending a year with colleagues researching high-performing MATs, I now believe that great leadership is about coherence. Coherence starts with one thing: a shared mission to transform the life chances and outcomes of children. It's non-negotiable for me that every MAT and school has a clear mission – and the very best are so specific that they guide strategic choices about the schools and communities they will work with.

So just as the best schools translate their missions and values into a strong school culture and a focus on teaching and learning, the best MATs translate their mission into a clear school improvement strategy across all their schools that in turn informs its staff structure and operations.

It means doing the hard work of truly clarifying the purpose of an organisation and making some hard strategic choices about how it achieves this purpose.

One example of this is a trust in the east of England. Its mission is to remove the barriers to success that affect many of the white working-class children in the area.

The trust began life as one secondary headteacher applying her school's successful model of improvement to another and turning it around. The leadership then realised that to achieve their mission they needed to reach pupils earlier, recruiting local feeder primary schools to create a community of all-through education.

This change resulted in a MAT with a hub model, and the next time they decided to grow, the trust repeated this to create another local hub of secondaries and their feeder primaries.

These significant strategic changes meant the trust needed to change how it operated. The head realised she needed to change her role with this increase in scale – moving away from headship and redefining herself as CEO with different responsibilities. Education directors and finance and HR teams were recruited to help manage the new large organisation.

As the strategy evolved the MAT's structure and operations were thoughtfully changed to remain coherent, creating a new way of working that would continue the original mission on a larger scale.

Achieving a coherent school improvement strategy in a MAT is difficult. They are complex organisations, often across different geographies, with different schools at different levels of performance that joined the trust at different times.

But coherence is important because without it MATs risk failing to live up to their potential as drivers of school improvement. Looking around the sector, we can all see examples of MATs where an inability to evolve in the face of change or challenge has led to compromised outcomes for the children in their care.

“Without coherence MATs risk failing to live up to their potential

It should be the goal of every school leader to provide teachers with the optimum conditions to teach children, develop their practice and progress in or master their roles. A MAT with a coherent mission, strategy and operating model is much more likely to do this. The CEO may not be in the classroom – but it's their job to create the conditions where every child in every one of their schools is learning.

This has been part of a substantial research project and what we've learned is being shared via our new report and our CEO development programmes. I'm especially looking forward to having some more concrete answers the next time a leader asks for advice on running a great MAT, though it will still begin with, “Well, it's complicated...”

We know there's work to do with the disadvantage gap in this country – but where do we stand on the international scale, asks Natalie Perera?

The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is the leading measure used by policymakers to gauge the state of educational inequality in England. Organisations such as my own scrutinise it relentlessly, assessing the size of the gap, the latest trends, and by extension the progress we are making towards an equitable education system.

While the gap has narrowed slightly over the last 10 years, recent progress has been slow and we are still decades away from reaching a system in which a child's background has no bearing on their outcomes at school.

The EPI's latest report, published in partnership with Professors John Jerrim and Toby Greany at the IoE, looks at how well England is serving its disadvantaged pupils, compared to other developed nations.

It is well documented that England trails behind many other developed countries when it comes to maths performance of all pupils in the triannual PISA tests, yet our research finds this disappointing situation also extends to the disadvantage gap in maths. At GCSE level the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in England is equivalent to one whole grade – positioning us firmly in the bottom half of developed nations, in 27th place out of 44.



NATALIE PERERA

Executive director, the Education Policy Institute

Educational disadvantage: How does England compare?

In reading, the findings are slightly more positive – although the gap still stands at three quarters of a grade. England, again, lingers in a mid-table position. Interestingly, all other UK home nations fare much better – with only Macao ranking ahead of Wales on the gap in reading out of all developed nations. This could, however, be a feature of poor overall performance in Wales.

Alongside the disadvantage gap, our report also looks at the overall performance of disadvantaged pupils in England, and how they compare with leading nations' disadvantaged pupils. Painting a picture that is equally as worrying for social mobility, our findings show that just one in 10 disadvantaged pupils in England achieve top grades in GCSE maths – nearly half as many as the number of disadvantaged pupils in Singapore.

On these measures of educational

disadvantage, we are at best, very average. Yet there does not need to be a trade-off between high performance and high equity. There are several developed nations that are able to achieve both.

So, what are the likes of Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Hong Kong and Macao doing right?

Firstly, they avoid the selection and segregation of pupils. In highly segregated systems, disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be found in less popular schools – with schools serving few disadvantaged students less able to counter the effects of that disadvantage. Accordingly, any further structural changes to the English school system which advance social selection or segregation, are likely to be counter-productive to social mobility.

Countries that perform well on both the gap and overall performance of disadvantaged pupils are also marked by funding systems

that cater to such pupils' needs. England actually fares quite well on this measure – aided by the pupil premium, and a new funding formula that is underpinned broadly by progressive principles.

Lastly, countries with high equity and high performance tend to have a sizable focus on attracting and retaining high-quality teachers. Here, we know that England has a challenge ahead – PISA data has shown that 45 per cent of heads reported teacher shortages were the greatest hindrance to improving outcomes, compared to the OECD average of 30 per cent. The situation in disadvantaged schools is likely to be even more challenging – with recruitment difficulties often more acute in these schools,

“
Just one in 10 disadvantaged pupils in England achieve top grades in GCSE maths

coupled with higher levels of turnover.

While we know that we cannot simply transplant aspects of successful education nations into less successful ones, we should set not accept anything less than both high performance and high equity as our overall aim for education in England.

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REVIEWS

TOP BLOGS OF THE WEEK

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Our blog reviewer of the week is Jill Berry, a former head, now educational consultant, author and Twitter addict @jillberry102

Learning to love challenge

@JenWillis1

My first blog choice this week came out last year, but I only read it when it re-emerged recently through Twitter. I'm featuring it here for the benefit of others who may be in the same position. Jen Willis discusses the subject of challenge and observes that, in her experience teaching primary children, some relish it while others avoid it.

She explores why some children appear "fragile learners" and what we can do to support them, bolster their confidence and build their capacity to manage risk. She talks of the importance of knowing your children – "really noticing them". In her view, "the most important factor in helping a class develop resilience is your relationship with the pupils".

Middle leaders: the forgotten stratum

@debsnet

Deborah Netolicky, a school leader and researcher from Australia, writes about the importance of middle leaders who, she believes, do not attract the attention they merit, given their contribution to schools. She explains the professional development opportunities her school offers them, an approach she describes as "bedded in the organisation but flexible to individual needs", and considers how investing in them can support them as they are "squeezed" between the teams they lead and senior leadership.

The problem with pleasing parents

@huntingenglish

Alex Quigley accepts that building positive relationships with parents is important, but considers ways in which prioritising keeping parents happy can be problematic. He discusses the pressure on teachers to spend a disproportionate amount of time on marking, the compulsion to set more homework than is necessary or productive, decisions about student grouping which are not properly informed by professional judgement, and the

volume of formal written reports.

He suggests that communication is key. Parents usually want what they believe to be best for their children, but schools need to ensure they are informed and aware of the potential negative repercussions of what they may have come to accept as the norm.

We infect them with our passion and we infect them with our stress

@thosethatcan

Emma Kell, a senior leader and author, focuses on teachers' susceptibility to stress, which she fully understands from her professional experience and her research. She recognises that how teachers feel and behave has repercussions for the mood in the classroom and the experience of the students, quoting one pupil: "When teachers are passionate, they infect us with their passion, and when they are stressed, they infect us with their stress."

This gave her pause for thought, and she offers strategies for dealing with stressful feelings in an attempt to minimise any adverse effects on the experience of those we teach. Because, as Emma says, "our stress is not their problem".

Reading together: a blast from the past

@russellhobby

Russell Hobby, the CEO of Teach First, writes for Achievement for All about the power of reading together with children, something that goes far beyond literacy competence and touches on the depth of our relationships and our identity.

"A good story is genuinely mind-altering: a route into times, places and people beyond our reach, the best way invented to date to see the world through someone else's eyes and to understand why they might do what they do."

School leaders and civility

@DrGaryJones

Gary examines the idea of civility, asking whether we have a clear shared understanding of exactly what it is in our schools, and how recent research suggests the importance of senior leaders behaving civilly to colleagues and addressing situations where staff do not show civility in their dealings with others. Gary connects this to "interactional justice" and teacher retention, suggesting that we give further consideration to the impact of our words and actions on others if we are to retain the teachers we need and should value.

Twitter chats pdf

@hannahtyremam

Finally, not a post as such, but a very useful PDF from Hannah Tyreman listing all the current UK Twitter chats. This is a great resource.

BOOK REVIEW

The learning power approach: Teaching learners to teach themselves

By Guy Claxton

Reviewed by Ffion Eaton, assistant headteacher, Tarporely High School and Sixth-Form College

Published by Crown House Publishing



When *The learning power approach* landed on my doormat, I have to admit feeling scepticism at first. As a teacher who has been heavily involved in all things teaching and learning, my distant memories of Guy Claxton and "building learning power" seemed to place the general concept in the realms of "Kagan cooperative learning" (*shudder*) with hazy memories of INSET day speakers selling their wares. Cue many teachers being inspired but no one really changing their practice as a result. Sound familiar?

However, there seems to have been an evolution. Claxton himself, in the opening section of his book, admits his ideas have developed and acknowledges the changing landscape of education – and how the conceptual idea of learning power has consequently adapted. He begins by setting out his rationale articulating what he is now calling the "Learning Power Approach" (LPA) as "what is possible in 21st

century schools", and then appeals to every teacher's desire to nurture independent and self-monitoring students. If only it were that simple, but the book teaches us that no, it isn't simple and somehow that is the point.

As Claxton argues, 'teaching learners to teach themselves' is a kind of educational utopia but one that, if accomplished, leads students to achieve well beyond the remit of external examinations; revisiting the well-trodden path that education's greater purpose is to nurture the life skills of the next generation. Subsequently, Claxton dedicates a significant chunk of the book to the fundamentals of learning, connecting LPA to his own experiences and the evidence base and whilst an impressive precis, it is a little drawn out.

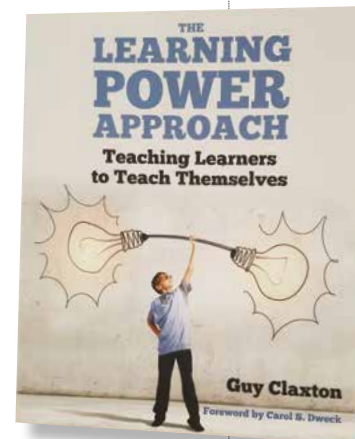
But after 45 pages of theorising, he

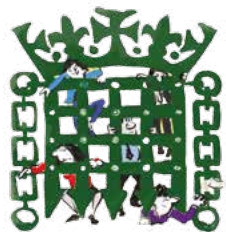
changes tack and the magic really begins. I found myself furiously scribbling down ideas to take back to my own school as he takes us through how LPA can actually work in practice. This is what we incredibly busy teachers will be most drawn to. Powerful accounts abound as we are taken through concrete examples from teachers across all key stages and countries and what they actually do to enable students from all backgrounds to "strengthen a small set of vital attitudes towards learning" as Claxton modestly puts it. And the examples are impressive, with a series of pedagogical interventions we can all take inspiration from.

But Claxton is only getting started with his "quick wins" as he follows up with a rigorous exemplification of each component of LPA. I have to admit, it's very convincing. Think metacognition, desirable difficulties and growth mindset all thrown into one, with convenient QR codes for quick access to relevant clips online. There's a significant nod to Carol Dweck in this book and her endorsement is confirmed in the foreword. Even the section which suggests how teachers can be "learning coaches" adds a new layer to the metacognitive approach to teaching that many of us are presently worshipping, and it's fascinating.

Yes, at times Claxton's vision is definitely one of idealism, especially as he sets out the expectation that as teachers we should get all of our students "wondering and contemplating", whatever that means. Yet, the antidote comes in the form of clear pedagogical recommendations. For example, his analogy that in a complex David Attenborough documentary, it is the behind-the-scenes feature that reveals the production company's real work, thoughts and processes. This reminds us to regularly show students what he calls "the innards of learning". While ostensibly obvious, it is most definitely food for thought. How often have I really done that, I wondered.

Overall, Claxton's call to empower students reminds us all to take a breather from the exam treadmill and actually take more than a momentary glance at our entrenched methods of pedagogy. This really is worth a look.





Week in Westminster

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

MONDAY:

Sleeping

TUESDAY:

What would you do if you had Ofsted's credit card for the day? Would you wine and dine yourself in a posh hotel? Would you splash out on luxury goods? Or would you splurge £800 in Argos and head off to Thorpe Park for the day?

It seems criminals opted for the latter when they defrauded the watchdog of £1,011 over the course of a two-year period.

Ofsted's credit card bill, published this week in response to a mystery Freedom of Information request, reveals inspectors fell victim to fraud several times between January 2015 and February 2017.

In 2015 the regulator lost £863.26, which went on two false transactions totalling £798.99 at Argos, £63.48 at a Best Western Hotel and 79p on iTunes.

Its luck was only marginally better in 2016, when £147.99 was spent at Thorpe

Park.

However, it was reimbursed for all of these transactions.

Documents released by Ofsted also reveal that staff are partial to a bit of western European cuisine.

Employees at the regulator used the credit card to spend £227,965.52 at restaurants, bakeries and fast food outlets.

Italian chain Carluccio's was a particular favourite: the watchdog spent £7,256.95 on a whopping 324 visits. European cuisine is obviously a firm favourite, as employees also spent £3,251.46 on 146 visits to French chain Cafe Rouge and £2,798.76 during 121 trips to Jamie's Italian.

Popular bakery chain Greggs received 63 visits from Ofsted employees, with a total bill of £228.75.



Other spending on the credit card included £183.99 for a new coffee table for its head office, and £134.97

for a Sony digital camera on Amazon that was "required urgently for inspection of unauthorised schools".

One unfortunate inspector spent £8.28 on dry cleaning after she "managed to get some sticky paint/acrylic matter on the dress" while observing a class.

However, while we've had fun reading about Ofsted's weird and wonderful spending, for an organisation with hundreds of employees for whom business travel is a must, £1 million over two years isn't the worst expenses bill we've seen.

Meanwhile, the education select committee may be in need of a bit of extra cash itself to pay someone to check its spelling.

Committee staff managed to incorrectly spell the names of two of the three witnesses who appeared at its hearing into the quality of alternative provision.

Week in Westminster isn't sure whether Jules Daubly (Daulby) or Marion Gilloly (Gillooly) noticed the error, but we know we'd be a bit miffed if our appearance in front of a committee of MPs entered into

the public records with our names spelled wrong!

Then again, the education committee's staff must be busy, given that chair Robert Halfen announced two new inquiries this week alone, so we can probably forgive them.

WEDNESDAY:

Free schools pioneer Toby Young may have walked away from his controversial appointment to the board of the Office for Students in January, but on Google, there still stands a lasting tribute to his memory.

People searching for the OfS using the search engine were tickled to find the regulator's entry at the top of the results page features a picture of Young, despite the fact it makes no mention of him whatsoever.

God bless Google's algorithm!

CHECK OUT @SCHOOLSWEELIVE FOR LIVE TWEETS OF WESTMINSTER EVENTS



Name Fiona Ballinger

Age 46

Occupation Head of science faculty, Barnwood Park Arts College

Location Gloucester

Subscriber since October 2016



FLY ON THE WALL

Where do you read your copy of *Schools Week*?

Usually at home in the evenings while I'm cooking dinner for my three kids.

Which section of the paper do you enjoy the most?

The news and book reviews are my favourite. I used to be an avid reader of fiction, but I now have a pile of educational books that I am working through.

If you could wave a magic wand and change one education policy, which would it be?

More funds for comprehensive schools – I work in an area with a high number of selective schools and we have a large number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It's really hard to listen to government plans to fund grammar schools when our needs are greater.

Who is your favourite education secretary of all time?

Justine Greening. She didn't make any drastic changes, but I really felt she understood education from a teaching perspective!

What is your favourite story or investigation reported in *Schools Week*?

The story on black girls taking the lead in STEM subjects from Jan 2017.

What do you do with your copy of *Schools Week* once you've read it?

I used to just have an electronic copy so I had a folder set up to keep them. I've now got paper copies that are piling up on the side at home. I haven't quite decided where to put them.

What would you do if you were editor of *Schools Week* for a day?

Investigate how pupil premium funds are spent in schools.

Favourite memory of your school years?

I didn't actually like school, but I can always remember going cross-country running in the snow, and walking when out of sight of PE teacher! It seemed like a victory at the time.

If you weren't working in education, what would you be doing?

I can't imagine not working in education! Probably science research of some kind?

Favourite book on education?

This is difficult, but my favourite at the moment is *What does this look like in the classroom?* by Carl Hendrick

What new things would you like to see in *Schools Week*?

Successful educational research strategies for teaching and learning, particularly for high prior-achievers.

If you could be a fly on the wall in anyone's office, whose would it be?

My year 11 students to see how they tackle homework and revision...



Fly on the Wall is a chance for you, the subscriber, to tell us what you love (and hate) about *Schools Week*, who you'd like to spy on and, of course, what the world of education would look like if you were in charge...

One super-cool new science project

FEATURED

A new project is offering students the chance to take part in official research into the polar ice caps and their role in the Earth's climate system.

The project, called MELT (Monitoring our Environment, Learning for Tomorrow), was launched this week by the Institute for Research in Schools, and will see pupils calculate their carbon footprint and that of their school with an online carbon calculator, before exploring ways of reducing it.

Students will also analyse satellite images of the polar regions to see the rate at which icebergs are forming and melting, collaborating with Dr Anna Hogg from the Centre for Polar Observation and Modelling (CPOM) at the University of Leeds to share their findings with Earth observation scientists.

"We used Sentinel-1 satellite data to watch a giant iceberg four times the size of London break free from Antarctica's Larsen-C ice shelf in 2017, and now students can use the same data to measure if new icebergs carve off some of the fastest flowing glaciers in the world," Dr Hogg explained.

The project ties in with the work of polar explorer Robert Swan, who has challenged young people in the UK to remove 326 million tonnes of CO2 from the atmosphere by 2025.

A pilot of the project supported by a grant from the UK Space Agency has been taking



Measuring up

place since February this year at 25 schools across the UK, and two schools in Norway and Florida.

"MELT has presented a group of our year 9 students with an amazing opportunity to be part of novel science research, that will undoubtedly enrich their experience of learning science in a way that they wouldn't otherwise have access to until



Students take part in another IRIS science project

university and beyond," said Darren Harman, the STEM learning leader at Sir Robert Woodard Academy, one of the pilot schools.

"Students are excited at what they might discover looking at data no other human has yet cast their eyes upon."

To get involved with the project, schools should email info@researchinschools.org.



Evan Lewis with Hugh Sexey CE Middle School pupils

SHARE A PENCIL, SAVE THE WORLD

Schools are being encouraged to get their pupils to share their pencils to raise awareness of the struggles faced by children in poverty accessing education.

The annual Share a Pencil Day, which will take place on May 23, aims to help students understand the difficulties of learning with limited resources, by asking them to share one pencil between two for a whole day.

Participating schools will have access to free lesson plans, videos and posters aimed at pupils in years 5 to 10, exploring what life is like for youngsters in poverty-stricken areas around the world, including those living in conflict zones.

Last year over 25,000 UK school children took part in the event, and Hope, the organisation behind it, hopes to engage 100,000 this time around.

"By helping children understand that access to an education is not a given for all, we will hopefully give them a desire to see change. Many children who took part last year were simply unaware that some children didn't even have a pencil," said Evan Lewis, Hope's founder.

To find out more, visit: www.hope.co.uk/share-a-pencil-day-sign-up-form.



Khadija Saye



A photography student at Rugby School

Photography award launched in memory of Grenfell victim

A photography award has been set up by the Boarding Schools Association in memory of Khadija Saye, a rising star of the medium who died in the Grenfell Tower disaster.

The Khadija Saye Photography Award will be presented to a pupil with an outstanding photography portfolio at a state or independent boarding school in membership of the BSA.

Khadija was a former boarder at Warwickshire-based Rugby School, after receiving a bursary to study there.

The first-ever recipient of the award has been named as Alexander Yang, a year 12

student at Dean Close School in Cheltenham, who will also receive £250 in prize money.

Two runners-up, Elisa Rosati from St Clare's in Oxford and Isobel Wilson from Westonbirt School in Gloucestershire, will each receive a £50 iTunes voucher.

The award will be officially presented at the BSA annual heads' conference on May 2 in Brighton.

"Khadija produced a beautiful documentary series on Gambians living London. She was going to do great things and was beloved by all who knew her," said Amy Farrelly, Khadija's photography teacher at Rugby.

School shows community spirit



Helping hands: DLD College students

Twenty sixth-formers have been volunteering at a charity that supports young people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds in London.

The group, from Westminster's DLD College London, spent time at Ambition Aspire Achieve's Terence Brown Arc, a centre providing care and support to young people with disabilities and additional needs, and their families.

During their visit, the students spent time playing games with children at the centre, before donning rubber gloves and cleaning the communal areas, tidying up the garden and even chopping up old trees for recycling.

"The students left behind a greatly improved building and grounds, making a real difference. I hope everyone enjoyed attending the event as much as we did hosting," said Kevin Jenkins OBE, the founder of Ambition Aspire Achieve.

"Our students were fantastic on the day and were a great representation of the college. They worked incredibly hard and it was inspiring to see them so enthusiastic about helping this worthwhile cause," added Gareth Evans, director of studies at DLD College London.



Chop chop: Recycling wood

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new



JEREMY QUARTERMAIN

Headteacher,
Rossall School

START DATE: August 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Deputy head,
Brentwood School

INTERESTING FACT: Jeremy attended the Junior Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and was a member of the National Youth Wind Orchestra.



ANDREW BROWNE

Headteacher, Wantage
CE Primary School

START DATE: September 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Headteacher, St Nicholas CE
Primary School

INTERESTING FACT: Andrew is passionate about the outdoors. He leads a beaver scout group and a scout group in his spare time, and spends most summer weekends hiking up mountains or sitting around a campfire.



JO READ

Executive headteacher,
North Walsham Infant
School and North
Walsham Junior School

START DATE: September 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Headteacher, Worstead Primary
School

INTERESTING FACT: Jo is a classically trained violinist, and holds a degree in music.



SAM FREEDMAN

Chief executive,
Ark's Education
Partnerships Group

START DATE: June 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Executive director, Teach First

INTERESTING FACT: Aged 11, Sam won notoriety at school by shouting "Norman Lamont's resigned" into every classroom after he'd heard the news.



STUART BROOKS

Headteacher,
Sanders School

START DATE: September 2018

PREVIOUS JOB: Deputy head, School 21

INTERESTING FACT: Not only did Stuart and his two brothers all become teachers, they also all married teachers.

Get in touch!

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

future



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- Research Ed Strand -

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- Paul A. Kirschner -
- #WomenEd Strand -
- SEND Strand -

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COGNITA

SCHOOLS WEEK

SCHOOLS WEEK Sudoku challenge

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

Last Week's solutions

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

Difficulty:
EASY

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

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Difficulty:
EASY

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

Spot the difference
to WIN a **Schools Week** mug



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