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Exposed: Agnew's £35m school waste claims

Cost-cutter advised school to replace experienced teachers with support staff

School told to cut supply spend by teaching three classes in dining hall

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Editor's top picks



The MPs most likely to be the next PM, and what it means for schools

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News: Ofsted

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Ofsted downgrades dozens of 'outstanding' schools

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Not one "outstanding" school reinspected under a clampdown by Ofsted has retained its top rating.

In December, the government told the watchdog to step up its interventions of so-called "exempt" schools so that poor standards of safeguarding could be picked up.

Schools Week understands the changes were introduced in January. In the latest data, which covers January 9 to February 1, Ofsted reinspected 46 "exempt" schools.

Of those, 37 were downgraded to "good", eight were rated "requires improvement" and one became "inadequate".

Ofsted has been lobbying the government to lift the exemption given to the top-rated schools, warning that many will have declined since their last inspection.

Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), said the figures showed there was "good sense in ending the exemption" for a "more transparent cycle of inspection for all schools".

Ofsted should "instead focus on identifying failure and providing a stronger diagnostic insight for schools that are struggling".

"This should then be the trigger for



well-funded and meaningful support. This promotes the efficient use of scarce resources and provides for the effective use of the public funds spent on inspection."

Great Whelnetham Church of England voluntary-controlled primary school in Suffolk, which had not been inspected since 2007, was rated "inadequate" this January.

Inspectors said its leaders had not "maintained the school's standard of education since the previous inspection". The school was approached for comment.

Schools Week has also identified two more schools that dropped from "outstanding" to "inadequate" since January, but they do not yet feature in Ofsted's overall data.

Bury St Edmunds County Upper School, also in Suffolk, was "outstanding" in October 2013, but inspectors returned this year and rated it "inadequate", raising some worrying safeguarding concerns.

Leaders failed to take "all reasonable steps" to ensure pupil safety, and did not make required child protection referrals to the correct agencies when pupils were at risk, inspectors said.

Stephen Boor, chair of the Bury St Edmunds All-Through Academy Trust, which runs the school, said independent reviews of safeguarding and security were commissioned, but neither "found any areas of concern".

Water Hall Primary School in Buckinghamshire, part of the Lakes Academies Trust run by Tony Draper, a former NAHT president, received an "outstanding" rating in March 2013 and kept its inspection exemption when it became an academy in 2016.

However, inspectors visiting last month found the school "inadequate" in every area except early years provision.

Ofsted revealed yesterday that inspections of exempt schools carried out between September and December last year resulted in just 23 per cent maintaining their top grades. Of 117 schools inspected, more than one-third were rated "requires improvement" or "inadequate".

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said it was "only to be expected" that some outstanding schools would decline, given that Ofsted inspected them in response to specific concerns. "This shows that its risk assessment approach is working."

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Trust's flagship school 'fails to maintain high standards'

The flagship school of an academy trust run by a former regional schools commissioner has dropped two Ofsted grades after its first inspection in more than six years.

Inspectors rated the Samuel Ward Academy in Suffolk "requires improvement" earlier this month. It was rated "outstanding" following an inspection in October 2012.

Inspectors found leaders and governors had "failed to maintain the high standards reported at the previous inspection".

The school is part of the Unity Schools Partnership, a 22-school trust run by Dr Tim Coulson, the former regional schools commissioner for the east of England.

Rachel Gooch, a former Suffolk governor,

said that the school's "outstanding" award had opened the door to its status as an academy sponsor, teaching school alliance and research school.

She added that the latter role had brought in £200,000 in government funding.

"This system creates a huge pressure to keep the status that brings in the money and can lead to school leaders being distracted from their core roles," she said.

"Equally worrying is the suspicion that there are nominally outstanding schools delivering advice and training who no longer deserve the grade - and if Ofsted never visits, they will continue to do so."

Coulson told *Schools Week* that the school's

decline was down to "too many changes of leader".

"From our perspective, we were worried about the school. As the report says, we've made quite a lot of changes to get it back to where it's going."

Coulson said his trust would have "no difficulty" with its outstanding schools being inspected on a more regular basis, but said dropping the exemption wouldn't be his top priority while Ofsted was under-resourced.

He added that if Ofsted had downgraded the school two years ago, the trust would still have been able to justify its status as a teaching school alliance, research school and academy sponsor.

Politics: Tory leadership race

Top tips with **BETFREDDIE**



FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Following Theresa May's announcement that she will quit as prime minister before the next stage of Brexit negotiations, speculation has been rife about who will succeed her.

Here, *Schools Week* looks at the favourites to take the reins and what that might mean for education.



1. Michael Gove **ODDS: 7/2**

As education secretary, Gove presided over sweeping reforms, including the rapid expansion of academies. He is still loathed by A LOT of teachers. His legacy has been kept alive by Nick Gibb, the schools minister, but further development of the academies programme seems almost inevitable if Gove becomes PM. He was educated at a combination of state and independent schools and Oxford.



4. Dominic Raab **ODDS: 10/1**

If you think the rest of the Conservative Party is in love with grammar schools, then the arch-Brexiter is on another level. In 2014, he published the "Meritocrat's Manifesto" which pushed for a wider reintroduction of grammars. Ending the ban on new selective schools would almost certainly be back on the agenda if he became PM. The former education committee member was educated at grammar school and Oxford.



5. Sajid Javid **ODDS: 11/1**

As business secretary, Javid presided over the further education and skills brief, but is not known for his lengthy pontification on schools issues. In 2009 he argued in a *Conservative Home* article that parental involvement was "key to social mobility". He often tells the story of his upbringing as the son of a bus driver when talking about the mobility of disadvantaged children. He went to state schools and an FE college.



2. Boris Johnson **ODDS: 4/1**

The Eton and Oxford-educated and now slightly-less-foppier-than-usual former Mayor of London backed the expansion of grammar schools shortly before becoming an MP for the second time in 2015. The decision to ban new ones was, he said, "a real tragedy for this country."



6. Matthew Hancock **ODDS: 25/1**

The ever-enthusiastic former skills minister-turned-health secretary has taken a keen interest in the expansion of the academies programme in his Suffolk constituency, but is likely to be more FE-focused if he becomes PM. However, he proved last year he's not averse to weighing in on the schools debate after he called for a nationwide ban on mobile phones in schools.



3. Jeremy Hunt **ODDS: 9/1**

To the bemusement of his critics in the NHS, the private school and Oxford-educated former health secretary recently landed the plum job of foreign secretary. Another fan of academisation, Hunt has likened his health reforms to Gove handing autonomy to schools.



7. David Lidington **ODDS: 25/1**

Often mooted as a potential "interim" prime minister if May stands down, the long-serving frontbencher is not known for straying from the government line on education policy. In 2003 he voted to retain section 28, which banned schools from "promoting" homosexuality. Unlike most of the rest of this list, he went to Cambridge. He was also privately educated.



News: LGBT education

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Protests spread, despite parliament backing reforms

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INVESTIGATES

MPs have backed changes to relationships and sex education, as protests from parents against teaching primary pupils about LGBT relationships spread.

The reforms backed by parliament on Wednesday will mean that, from 2020, relationships and health education will be compulsory in all schools and sex education will be mandatory in all secondaries. The reforms still need approval from the House of Lords.

But it comes as more schools face protests at their school gates. It follows Parkfield Community School, in Birmingham, suspending its "No Outsiders" programme, which teaches pupils about LGBT relationships and other issues, after protests by some parents.

Sam Offord, headteacher of Birchfields Primary School in Manchester, found protesting parents giving out letters at the school gates.

The letters, written in the first person and with a space for parents to fill in their details, raised concerns about the teaching of "same-sex relationships in the same manner as heterosexual relations, i.e. on an equal footing" and of the parent's children being "exposed to beliefs, values or teachings that contradict those of my religious beliefs".

It said LGBT gender theory was "not based on conclusive scientific research" and that teaching that sexuality was fluid "will erode the normality of heterosexual relationships and is in contradiction to traditional religious values and principles".

It also raised concerns about pupils being "sexualised" and the use of "explicit graphic material", which it said will "affect their innocence and mental wellbeing".

Offord said that her school only talked about sexuality in terms of families that could include two mums or two dads, and showing respect to people as part of British values. She said that school policy on the subject had been written "in tandem" with parents.

She told *Schools Week*: "We've not got anything to hide... I'm not surprised my parents are worried and upset because of some of the things they've been told,

In addition, I do not believe children should be sexualised with such content, especially using explicit graphic material, which is extremely inappropriate within religious and other value systems. Talking to young children about such issues will affect their innocence and mental wellbeing. Parents are the primary educators of their children. Only parents can discuss these topics in keeping with their children's upbringing by taking into consideration specific religious sensitivities and nuances. I understand the need to teach children essential values including tolerance, compassion and respect so that they develop as well-rounded individuals. However, there are more effective and child-friendly ways of achieving this, without compromising the innocence and wellbeing of children.



Sam Offord

Photo: Tom Leishman

which are completely untrue. It's complete misinformation they are getting."

"It's just a misuse of social media to whip up vulnerable people, which has damaged the trust that they've got in their schools. That can never be a good thing."

In Manchester, about 250 parents have joined a Whatsapp group to voice their concerns about sex education. *The Manchester Evening News* reported that some of the messages were homophobic, including discussing the sexuality of teachers.

The letter handed out at Birchfields, and at least six other schools in Manchester, can be downloaded from the website of a group called Islamic RSE.

A spokesperson for Islamic RSE said it had "no connections with any protests, nor do we have an official letter for parents". The PDF of the letter has since been removed from its website, but it can still be downloaded as a Word document.

Offord added: "We need a bit more support from the DfE, saying 'we fully support schools that are teaching equality and respect'. It's isolating for headteachers."

Under the new guidance, headteachers will be allowed to refuse the requests of parents to

withdraw their children from sex education lessons in "exceptional circumstances", but the DfE has said it will not define exactly what this covers.

However, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, told MPs last week that exceptional circumstances could include "if a child has experienced a sexual incident, perhaps with another child, or inappropriate touching".

"The key point is, however, that it will be the circumstance of the child and not the views of the headteacher that will lead to that decision," he said.

Despite backing from Ofsted and Damian Hinds, the education secretary, Parkfield Community School suspended teaching "No Outsiders" until a resolution can be reached with parents.

Liam Byrne, Parkfield's local MP, told a debate in parliament last week that the government was "much too slow to get a grip" on the situation.

"That delay allowed those with intolerant and extreme views to hijack what was a group of parents simply wanting their voice to be heard and their role to be respected," he said.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said that school leaders "shouldn't have to be brave to deliver these subjects in their schools, or have to put their personal safety and wellbeing at risk".

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, added: "Our advice to any school that faces this sort of situation is to positively engage with concerned parents."

A spokesperson for the DfE said it was working to solve the Parkfield dispute. "We trust headteachers to make the decision as to what is and is not appropriate for their pupils to learn. We think it's right that schools consult parents and take their views into account when making these decisions."

Investigation

Agnew's army fires cost-cutting salvos

Academies minister Lord Agnew told school leaders last year that cost-cutting advisers sent in to help struggling schools had found £35 million in savings. He claimed these were 'essentially misdirected resources'. The DfE tried to keep the reports secret, but we've finally seen them. Here's what we found...

JOHN DICKENS
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Lord Agnew's cost-cutting consultants told a school to replace experienced teachers with support staff on term-time contracts, while another was told to limit lunch portions for pupils.

Secret reports seen by *Schools Week* reveal other tips from the "school resource management advisers" include saving money on supply teachers by instead using spare staff to cover three classes at a time in the dining hall.

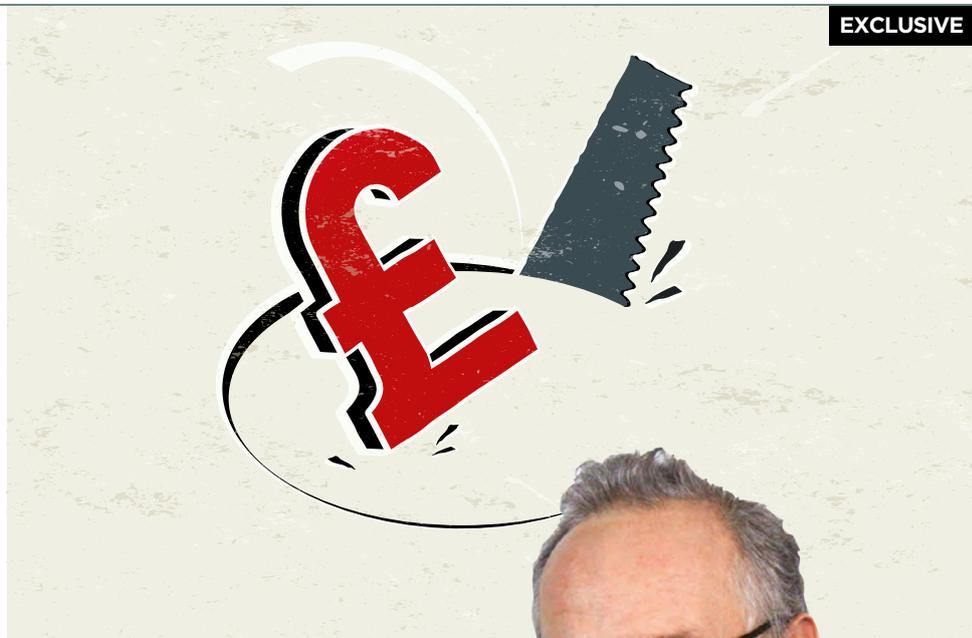
The same school, Corfe Hills, a secondary in Dorset, was also urged to keep 50 per cent of money its pupils raised for local charities – including a children's hospice.

Agnew, the academies minister, parachuted the SRMAs into schools under a trial scheme last year to help them to cut costs.

At a conference in November he claimed the advisers – normally school business managers – found £35 million of "essentially misdirected resources" at 72 schools and trusts, which was a "colossal sum of money".

He has since extended the trial with £2.3 million extra funding to provide at least 160 advisers.

While the government refused to release



EXCLUSIVE



the reports from the trial to *Schools Week*, we have since seen about 20 from the schools and trusts that took part.

They reveal advice to cut curricula and slash the number of hours in a school week.

"These findings read like a bad April Fool's Day joke. They make a mockery of Lord Agnew's claim that he can root out waste in schools," says Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL).

Replace experienced teachers with support staff

A report into the Wootton Academy Trust said there was an opportunity to "replace a retiring teacher on UPS3 (upper pay scale 3) [redacted] with a member of [redacted] support staff on a term-time only contract".

Under the heading "rationale", it said: "Someone who is not a qualified teacher could fill the role." This could save £36,000 a year.

The same report added: "As and when the opportunity arises, replace UPS teachers who leave with NQTs or staff paid on the main teacher pay scale". They said the average teacher cost at the trust was "very high".

Chris Billington, a partner in the education team at Wrigleys Solicitors of Leeds and Sheffield, says there is no general principle

that if an expensive teacher leaves you can't replace them with a cheaper teacher – such as part of a restructure on financial grounds or if staff retire or choose to leave.

"The question is, do you have the right qualification, not what level of experience... It's very easy to get a cheaper teacher in, but it may well have an impact on the quality of education."

A report for the Heath Family Trust says its recovery plan did not include "opportunistic savings" such as a "U3 scale teacher resigning and being replaced by a M1 scale teacher". This could save up to £150,000 a year.

The trust told *Schools Week* it always seeks

to "appoint the best candidates to the roles we have available in order to secure the best outcomes for our students".

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, says moves to replace experienced staff with new teachers had "huge implications for workload of current teachers. It's a false economy".

Other proposals include eroding pay conditions. An adviser told Stratton Upper School in Bedfordshire to reduce its 52-week contracts for administrative staff, which the adviser wrote were "not needed and not affordable".

This could help to save £4,000, but "likely to be more with outsourcing".



Investigation

“The proposals do not identify ‘waste’, but instead range from cutting educational provision to desperate ideas that would deliver marginal gains, such as smaller lunch portions, and the morally dubious suggestion of diverting money intended for charity.

“These findings read like a bad April Fool’s Day joke”

“The whole thing smacks of desperation built upon the false notion that the funding crisis can be solved by trimming a few costs here and there, when the reality is that all possible efficiency savings were exhausted long ago and schools are running on empty.”

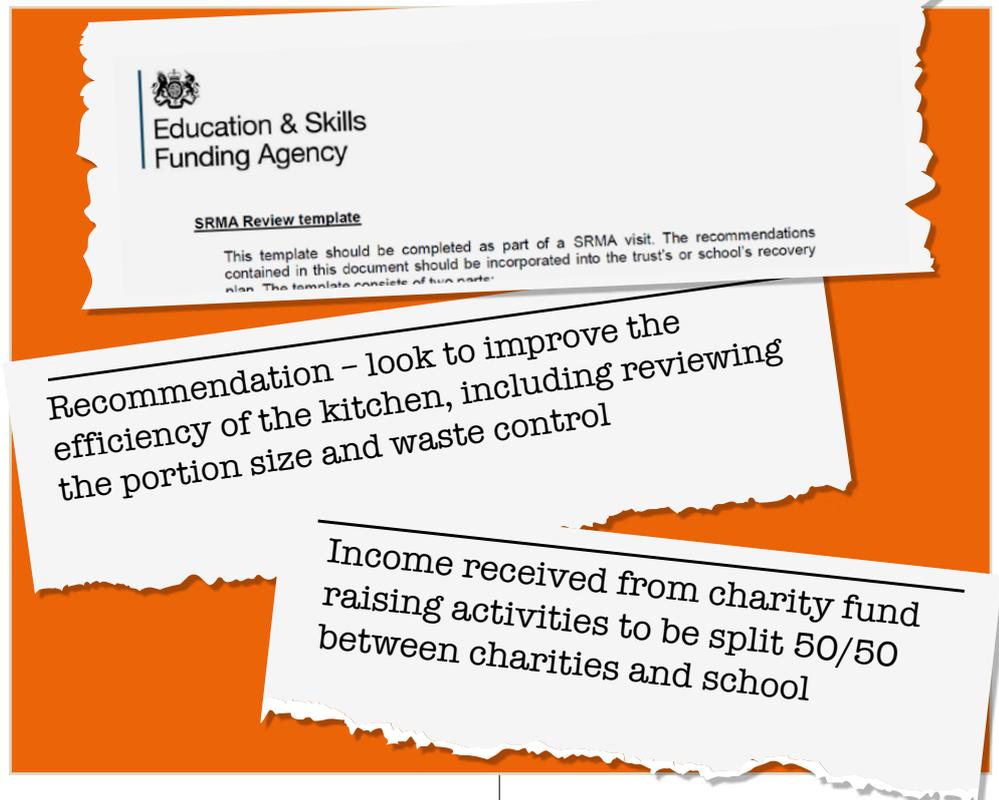
Some trusts also claim the advisers told them to make savings they had already made, or already identified and were actioning.

But proposals in some of the reports, obtained under the freedom of information act, have angered education bosses.

“Cover three classes in the dining hall”

Corfe Hills was told its supply budget was “extremely high” and to “adopt a new model for provision of cover with immediate effect”.

Under an “analysis/rationale” tab the adviser’s report said “adoption of alternative model (ie using existing spare staff capacity to cover three classes at a time in the dining hall) will significantly reduce the supply cover budget”. This would save nearly £50,000,



the equivalent to one full-time upper pay teacher.

The school says it did not implement the suggestion.

A report for the Chapelton Academy, a sixth-form free school in Sheffield, advised it to “look to improve the efficiency of the kitchen, including reviewing the portion size and waste control”.

The “analysis/rationale” section said the school’s business manager believed the portions were “too large” and “by controlling these, it will reduce the amount of food purchased”.

It also suggested the school explore a food service to local businesses for “less food waste” and to create “potentially more income”. No figure for savings was included.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, says it is “quite extraordinary” to have got to the stage where schools have to consider cutting lunchtime portion sizes in an attempt to balance their budgets.

But the Department for Education says the recommendations should be viewed in the wider context of the report, not in isolation.

It says the proposal for cutting portion size was made after the adviser reviewed the trust’s catering with the chain’s business manager and found “there was a large amount of waste”.

As with all reports, it is the “responsibility of the trust to decide which of these recommendations are most appropriate to implement”.

Cut your counsellor’s hours – while ‘excessive’ PFI soars

A report into Thrybergh Academy in South Yorkshire said it had a PFI contract that “appears excessive” (four times more per pupil than other schools pay for similar services, outside such a contract).

Not only that, the repayments rose each year at a “far quicker rate than the academy can sustain”.

But the report detailed just how helpless schools were to remove the shackles of PFI.

“I haven’t seen the contract which ends 2034, but am assured there is no opportunity to renegotiate the terms (this was apparently referred to a solicitor), indeed I am informed it states if the academy is not able to pay the contract, the ESFA is obliged to cover the cost,” said the adviser.

The increases might be easier to manage if the trust “can reduce some other staffing and running costs”.

One suggested solution was to review the curriculum support staff structure which was “well above average” for a through-school.

Replacing the full-time children protection manager with a member of teaching staff with teaching and learning responsibilities would save £33,000. Moving the careers/counsellor to work term-time only would save £4,000; bringing work experience in-house, £3,000.

Investigation



But Barton says: "The government needs to get its priorities right and spend money on schools rather than on providing unhelpful and insulting advice."

"Money raised by students should go to those charities"

It was also recommended at Corfe Hills that "income received from charity fundraising activities to be split 50/50 between charities and school".

The school raises about £7,000 a year for "local causes", and the change could boost the school's income in the future by about £5,000 a year. Under a "feedback" tab, the report added that the school "will consider how best to promote as the pupils currently choose the charity".

Pupils last year picked a local hospice and the Make-A-Wish foundation, which aims to transform the lives of children with critical illnesses.

Phil Keen, the school's head, told *Schools Week*: "We think money raised by students for charities they have identified should go to those charities in full.

"Diverting a couple of thousand pounds from this into school will not solve the genuine financial difficulty in a school that has already taken really tough decisions to cut costs."

Last year Agnew said that advisers "make the most of the resources available" and "are maximising investment in the classroom".

But reports seen by *Schools Week* include recommendations to cut the curriculum.

Leeds UTC was urged to "further review the timetable, especially key stage 5 and

reduce the number of subjects offered".

The report said: "The UTC indicated that geography would be removed from KS5 along with a rationalisation of the maths courses on offer." It said that would save the school £205,000 if staff cuts were included.

Whiteman says the suggestion is

"It is a picture of a system in retreat"

"troubling". "Cutting costs appears to be of a higher priority than broadening the curriculum or widening opportunities. It is a picture of a system in retreat."

Leigh UTC was told to explore a "review" of the length of its school week.

Despite Ofsted's praise for its "business length" day, the report added: "While the model is commendable the UTC cannot currently afford this."

The report recommended reducing the week from 31.25 hours to "nearer" 25 hours.

Annual accounts show the UTC, which opened five years ago, owes the government £1.5 million to repay loans after financial difficulties. The adviser's report said the recommended moves would achieve a model



that was "financially viable over the short term".

Schools Week saw the trial's reports in the same week that an analysis by education unions claims a £5.4 billion shortfall in school budgets over the past three years.

"The fact is, only new money from the treasury will solve the school funding crisis. Cost-cutting, fundraising and penny-pinching will not do it," Whiteman says.

"Sometimes you have to analyse the small things"

The reports also contain a list of checks, such as whether the school has a "good quality" three-to-five financial year plan.

If a trust was visited, there was also a section on whether an integrated curriculum financial planning tool – such as those drawn up by the Outwood Grange Academies Trust or ASCL – had been utilised.

Many of the reports highlighted "curriculum headroom" gains in unallocated timetable sessions, and compared things such as staffing structures and contact ratios to other schools to check if efficiencies could be made. Many included proposals for staff restructuring and freezing pay rises.

Matthew Clements-Wheeler, the chair of the Institute of School Business Leadership, which accredits the advisers, says: "It is right that school leaders are gently asked to

Investigation

consider their resource allocation decisions in light of the latest research, money that is available and expectations – often out of our control – from politicians, pupils and parents.”

He says that parents have a right to expect “we are not being profligate with resources. Sometimes that will include analysing the small things, the minutiae of running an organisation, but when you multiply that across a trust it can soon add up”.

Agnew’s brief for advisers was to be a “second opinion to question critically some of the decisions trusts have made”. Clements-Wheeler says the minister was clear that “the responsibility for taking the actual actions to address difficulties isn’t on the shoulders of the school resource management advisers”.

The DfE said: “We are continuing to work with schools that have had SRMA support to understand which recommendations they have implemented and what impact they have made.”

“The early evidence shows that this collaborative approach has been positively received and we are planning to publish more details on the actions trusts have taken in due course.”



Agnew’s £35 million claims shot down

Agnew claimed his advisers found £35 million of savings across their 72 visits during the trial. However, some trusts claimed advisers included savings in their report that had already been made, or had been identified and were being actioned.

The Engage MAT claims it did not receive a report and was not advised of “any sums that could be saved nor of any phased implementation plan”.

The Brook Learning Trust, in an FOI response, says its adviser suggested it could save more than £1 million – but many of the savings had “already been identified and were being progressed by the

trust”. Some represented “double counting”, while “some proposed ‘savings’ were flawed because the cost of generating the saving would outweigh any benefit, and no account was taken of external inflationary cost pressures that negated the impact of potential savings”.

The trust says a “final report was never agreed” with the DfE, and refuses to share the “non-agreed version”.

The De La Salle Trust says it had “already sought significant savings” after it received a financial notice to improve. “The process was more a validation of the steps we had already taken.” It added: “As a result there is no report to share.”



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Job losses could follow funding disarray

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EXCLUSIVE

Schools in Suffolk face having to fire staff after their council bungled the introduction of a new “banding” system for high-needs pupils.

Suffolk county council wrote to heads two months ago to apologise after passing on just 70 per cent of funding for special educational needs pupils in mainstream schools.

The error was made after the council introduced a new “banding” system for top-up funding, rather than funding pupils based on an assessment of their individual needs.

But schools say they are still in the dark over repayment of the funds.

One primary head, who did not wish to be named, said they took an excluded pupil with special needs and hired two teaching assistants this year on the expectation of receiving almost £15,000 a term under the new system.

But the school is still waiting for 30 per cent of its autumn term funding and has not heard from the council, meaning it is running a £10,000 in-year deficit – set to rise to £17,000 next term.

“The least you would expect is a timeframe for when we’re getting the money. I can’t plan for next term, and if I haven’t got the money in time, I will have to get rid of the TAs. Then I will have a permanent exclusion on my hands.

“The council has also made how you apply much harder. It’s mucked up everything.”

Schools must now make separate requests for each year group, rather than in one block, causing staff a “much heavier workload”.

A secondary head, who also did not wish to be



named, claimed that in a bid to save money the council had simply “reinterpreted” the support pupils needed.

“The human cost of this is real. Teachers are going to have to sit down with children and explain why their teaching assistant is no longer working with them.”

In a private letter to heads dated January 23, the council said mainstream pupils were moved to “new funding bands”, but a quality check “identified inconsistencies in 40 per cent” of the allocations.

In most cases pupils were placed in a band higher than they should be, and so had been allocated too much money, and “in a few cases” to a lower band, said the letter from Judith Mobbs, the assistant director for inclusion and skills.

Mobbs said she was “very sorry” for the “concerning and frustrating” situation, particularly given the “potential financial issues” for schools.

But there are wider concerns as other cash-

strapped councils look to switch their assessment methods for distributing top-up funding.

In November, North Yorkshire county council consulted on changing the process for top-up funding, following significant financial pressures.

Torbay council also consulted this year on moving to a “banding threshold system” for top-up funding as one of four possible new systems.

Meanwhile, minutes from a schools forum meeting in Tower Hamlets, east London, in October show a headteacher requested that a move to banding “to make it harder to hit the threshold” only be used as a “last resort”.

A council officer answered banding needed to be looked at “to bring the budget into line”.

Gordon Jones, the cabinet member for children’s services at Suffolk, said the new system ensured mainstream schools received a “fairer funding settlement” and said the rest of the funding would be allocated as soon as a quality assurance process of the new bands had been finished.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

LAs should monitor academy exclusions too, says Wilshaw

Councils have become “wary” of intervening with “powerful” academy trust chief executives over exclusions because they have been “marginalised” in their oversight of schools, says the former head of Ofsted.

Sir Michael Wilshaw, the chief inspector between 2012 and 2016, told MPs on Wednesday that local authorities should have a beefed-up duty to monitor exclusions of all pupils in their areas, including those at academies.

Although headteachers have to report exclusions to their local authority, officials

believe that town halls are losing the ability to track pupils effectively as more and more schools have become academies.

Giving evidence to an inquiry held by the parliamentary education committee into knife crime, Wilshaw warned that local authorities “in many ways have been marginalised in terms of oversight of what goes on in schools over the past 10 to 15 years”.

“We’ve had the growth of academies and autonomous institutions, and I think the picture is confused at the moment,” he told MPs.

“I’m not sure local authorities know what is happening in schools, and particularly in schools that are not their own, academies and free schools, and feel wary of intervening with very powerful chief executives who will say ‘hold on a minute, you have no power, no influence on my institution’.

“There has to be a better balance, and local authorities need to have a part to play in monitoring what’s happening in all their schools, including academies and free schools.”

News: Funding

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Surge in councils given approval to shift millions from school budgets

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

EXCLUSIVE

The government has given its approval for nearly three-quarters more councils to shift millions of pounds of school funding into their high-needs pot.

Twenty-two local authorities have been allowed by the Department for Education to move more than 0.5 per cent from the schools block to the high-needs block this September, according to a written answer from Nick Gibb, the schools minister, this month.

That's 70 per cent more than the 13 local authorities that got permission to shift funding this year (2018-19).

A total of 38 had applied to move money from next year (2019-20).

South Gloucestershire got government approval to move 2.5 per cent, but in the end opted to move 1.9 per cent, or £2.9 million.

Fifteen of the 22 councils provided us with full figures for how much they were transferring, which totalled over £35 million.

Julia Harnden, a funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, warned that this left mainstream schools with less money to support pupils with lower levels of additional needs that didn't qualify for top-up funding.

"The money is being moved to pupils with the most severe needs, and others are missing out."

The government decided last year that councils could only move up to 0.5 per cent from general schools funding to the high-needs block, which funds vulnerable pupils in specialist and mainstream settings, with the agreement of the local heads' forum.

If councils wish to move more than 0.5 per cent, or want to move 0.5 per cent or less without agreement from their schools forum, they must get approval from the DfE.

But the moving of money has left some school leaders feeling short-changed. Jim McAtear, the chair of Norfolk Academies, was expecting £330,000 for the trust's four schools next year, before the council got approval to move £4.6 million out of the schools block. The trust will now struggle to improve one school graded "inadequate" in a deprived area, he said.

"We needed all the money we could get. Some of the very schools that need the money most to help poorer pupils are losing out."

However, a spokesperson for Norfolk county council said more pupils moving out of mainstream schools into specialist provision called for more cash to be transferred to the high-needs block.

Other councils spoke of their regret at having to move the cash. A spokesperson for North Yorkshire council said it received £6 million less in central funding than it needed for high needs and warned that the system was "buckling".

Kent, which is moving £9 million, said the move was "something we would rather not do" but had been forced to do so owing to "the absence of adequate funding from the DfE".

Halton in Cheshire echoed that the government had failed to "fully fund" SEND provision, while Richmond-upon-Thames warned of "significant underfunding". Middlesbrough said it had "no option" but to request the transfer, and Stockton said the lack of funding had "sadly" left it with a "difficult decision" to make.

Five of the 22 councils got the go-ahead to move the cash in opposition to the wishes of their schools forum, *Schools Week* can also reveal.

The DfE refused to name them, but council responses reveal four were Dorset, Derby, North Yorkshire and Richmond-upon-Thames.

Nine councils also got separate approval



to move up to 0.5 per cent without schools forum agreement. These were Dudley, Essex, Hackney, Hull, Oxfordshire, Sefton, Somerset, Staffordshire and Surrey.

Stephen Tierney, the chair of Headteachers' Roundtable, said schools were being put in an "awful" position by "voting for less core funding so vulnerable pupils weren't too badly hit".

"The government is trying to slice up the cake, but the cake is simply not big enough. The only solution is for the government to put more money in the pot."

A DfE spokesperson said all schools block-movement requests were reviewed against clear criteria, which included the council's "reasons for the request", its strategic financial plan, and accompanying evidence from the local schools forum.

Which councils got permission to move more than 0.5% from the schools block to the high needs block?

Local authority*	Schools forum agreement to moving more than 0.5%?	% moved?	Amount moved	Political control
South Gloucestershire	Yes	1.9	£2.9 million	Conservative
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	Yes	1.1	£2.2million	Conservative
Stockton on Tees	Yes	1.1	£1.4 million	Labour
Derby	No	1	£1.8 million	no overall control
Halton	Yes	1	NA	Labour
Kent	Yes	1	£9 million	Conservative
Middlesbrough	Yes	1	£1 million	Labour
North Yorkshire	No	1	£3.4 million	Conservative
Bury	Yes	0.7	£900,000	Labour
Darlington	Yes	0.6	£400,000	Labour
Enfield	Yes	0.5	£1.4 million	Labour
Norfolk	Yes	0.5	£4.58 million	Conservative
Richmond upon Thames	No	0.5	£572,133	Lib Dems
Dorset	No	NA	£3.1 million	Conservative
Southwark	Yes	NA	£3.1 million	Labour

*7 councils did not respond



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Curriculum Counsell joins leading trust

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

EXCLUSIVE

A leading curriculum expert has joined the David Ross Education Trust (DRET) as it steps up its focus on developing a knowledge-rich curriculum.

Christine Counsell, who sits on Ofsted's curriculum advisory panel and was formerly director of education at Inspiration Trust, joined the trustee board earlier this month to advise on implementing a knowledge-based approach to teaching and learning at DRET.

According to DRET's website, the trust is "standardising" the curriculum and wants to ensure its education is "deep, knowledge-based and challenging".

"We are focused on implementing the 'One Trust' way across all stages in order to achieve this," it said.

"This includes ensuring that children are taught an interesting, stimulating and challenging curriculum by inspiring experts, with disadvantage not determining outcome."

Counsell had been heading up Inspiration Trust's curriculum development, but parted ways with the trust earlier this academic year.

On her appointment to DRET she said she would be "working closely with the trust's education leaders as they develop a knowledge-rich curriculum that acts as the driving force to improve education outcomes across its 34 schools".

"I have been impressed by the trust's determination to make subject communities central in this endeavour, its desire to get ongoing subject leadership right so that teachers develop through curriculum agency, and its exceptional commitment to the arts in education," she said. The role is unpaid.

David Ross, sponsor and chair of DRET, said: "Christine is rightly regarded as a pioneer in curriculum development. Her appointment to our board of trustees adds significant experience and expertise, which will greatly benefit the quality of education we provide to our students."

Academy trusts are increasingly focusing on curriculum development, with some mixed results.

In 2017 Justine Greening, then education secretary, announced a £7.7 million curriculum fund to pilot ways of delivering the 2014 national curriculum and to tackle workload.

The first £2.4 million of that was only made available to knowledge-rich programmes. The 11 schools to share the funding were all academies.

GAG-pooling 'is not as painful as you might think'

EXCLUSIVE



FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The leader of one of England's largest academy trusts says that pooling her schools' funding to stay afloat "wasn't as painful as you might think".

Rowena Hackwood (pictured), the chief executive of the David Ross Education Trust (DRET), told a Westminster Education Forum seminar this week that her chain "doesn't have a glorious financial history" as she set out the drastic measures she had to take to deal with a rising deficit.

Hackwood, a former education director at Capita, took over at DRET in May 2017 following the high-profile resignation of Wendy Marshall, the former chief executive, and a number of other leaders.

Last year, the Education and Skills Funding Agency warned that the trust, set up by David Ross, the co-founder of Carphone Warehouse and a Tory donor, was in a "vulnerable" financial position after forecasting a deficit of £4.9 million in June 2017. The trust's latest accounts show a deficit of £1.4 million as of August 2018.

In 2017 *Schools Week* revealed how academy trusts increasingly pooled their general annual grant – a process known as "GAG-pooling" – rather than top-slicing funding for central operations from money allocated directly to individual schools.

Many headteachers did not like the practice as it meant they lost autonomy over their budgets. The allocation of school budgets was also done behind closed doors.

But Hackwood, the only leader of a large multi-academy trust not to come from an

education background, told delegates at the event in London on Tuesday that the deficits at some of her schools were a "constant millstone around their neck", forcing her to act.

"We did pool our GAG funding very early, and we pooled deficits and surpluses as well," she said.

"That wasn't as painful as you might imagine. I had some schools that were running an annual in-year deficit of around £1 million. I had some schools that had cumulative surpluses of well over £500,000.

"My schools that had the cumulative deficits were never, ever, ever, going to recover. Having that constant millstone around their neck was preventing them from moving forwards."

Hackwood revealed that she also had to introduce a number of new systems to improve the trust's financial health.

"You may be surprised to know that in a business of our size we have no corporate HR system and we've only recently implemented a corporate finance system. Those kinds of things have really held the organisation back from being able to understand the sufficiencies."

She was able to smooth the change with heads, she said.

"I felt it was quite a brave move to address this with heads, but actually in a multi-academy trust we have a collective endeavour.

"We're all sharing our aims as an organisation to move the educational outcomes of our children and young people forward. So taking that decision about how to fund our schools fairly on the basis of what they need and not accidentally on the basis of what they historically had had, felt to me as the right moral as well as the right business choice."

Academy donations face more scrutiny

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The government is considering forcing academy trusts to declare income from related parties as well as expenditure.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency revealed in new guidance last week that it would "review our approach" to reporting income and donations from firms linked to trust leaders, and could change the rules from September.

The academies sector already faces significant changes to rules on financial dealings between trusts and linked companies from next Monday.

Trusts now have to seek permission to pay out more than £20,000 to a company run by its leaders, trustees or their family members. They will also have to declare their intention to enter a new agreement with any related party.

According to guidance published last Friday, trusts initially will not have to



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

declare money flowing the other way, such as donations from linked companies, but that could change when it is reviewed at the end of the summer.

Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said the rules were "yet another example of the academy sector being more transparent and held to higher standard than other types of schools in England".

Cruddas said the new rules, which take effect next week, did place an additional burden on trusts, but she accepted it was important that public money "is spent the way that parliament intends".

"Related-party transactions are not just a feature of academies and it should be the case that standards of transparency and

probity are applied equally to all types of schools."

The government confirmed that church schools would be exempt from the requirement to seek approval for transactions of more than £20,000 with their own diocese. *Schools Week* reported earlier this month that some were concerned they could be unduly affected.

Simon Foulkes, a business consultant at the law firm Lee Bolton Monier-Williams, which represents a number of dioceses and faith trusts, said the exemption for church schools and dioceses was "good news", but warned that the system for seeking approval more generally was "fairly onerous". It would need several pieces of evidence.

"There is still no additional guidance on what is meant by a related party, and so academy trusts will need to make a decision on the level of reporting they are comfortable with, and church academy trusts are likely to find the list uncomfortably long," he said in a blog.

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Top London comp's tenancy row exposes DfE land slip

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

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EXCLUSIVE



The affluent Holland Park School has been stuck on a short-term lease for over five years as it disputes who should pay significant costs to repair its new building, it has emerged.

The case exposes the government's lax control over who actually owns academy land, and the potential complications that can ensue.

In 2016, Schools Week revealed that the Department for Education did not know how many academy sites belonged to the government and said it might be too expensive to find out.

Holland Park became an academy in 2013. Instead of the usual 125-year lease, Holland Park agreed a short-term license to occupy the site, also known as a tenancy at will, while it dealt with "outstanding issues" with the council that it expected to "resolve quickly".

However, serious defects emerged with the state-of-the-art building, including spontaneously shattering glass, basement flooding leading to "potentially irreparable" damage to the swimming pool, and unsecured stone façade panels on the outside of the building which have fallen at least once.

The single-academy trust is now engaged in a lengthy battle with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea over who should pay for repairs to its £80 million main building, which was completed in 2012.

Antony Power, partner at Michelmores legal agency, said schools converting on tenancies at will is "not that unusual". But he added: "Five years is a long time, though. You have to question if a solution is ever going to be found if the issue has been running that long."

"The question will be what happens when the issues identified crystallise, for example, if the defects mean the building is unsafe. It's far from ideal."

The DfE website says it "strongly discourages" academies from using a tenancy at will, but it can be used to ensure an academy opens on time if it has been unable to complete the 125-year lease.

However, this is a "short-term solution" until the full lease is agreed and will only be approved if the lease "will be agreed shortly after conversion". It is not appropriate if there are "still significant issues to be resolved."

A spokesperson for Holland Park said "serious issues" with the building only emerged "some time" after signing the short-term lease, and the school has undertaken work to ensure the building is safe "at its own expense for the time being", with further work planned.

They said the "significant" costs should be "borne by RBKC which is our landlord and was responsible for the design and construction of the building. RBKC disagrees."

She added it would be "irresponsible" for the school to agree to a 125-year lease while the "issue of responsibility for defects remains unresolved."

A source told Schools Week Holland Park has used the elite law firm Mishcon de Reya to communicate with the council.

The trust, council and law firm did not respond to requests to confirm this. But the firm is one of two solicitors listed by the trust in its accounts.

Mishcon de Reya represented Princess Diana in her divorce from Prince Charles in 1996, and more recently worked with the Leave.EU campaign, having acted for Arron Banks.

Last week, an investigation by this newspaper revealed that Holland Park spent thousands of pounds on designer candles, luxury paint and furnishings from a bespoke design store in the past three years. Its head, Colin Hall, is paid £260,000 a year.

A spokesperson for the DfE said the lease was a matter between Holland Park and RBKC.

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ

New guidance on playing-field sell-offs

The Department for Education is updating guidance around selling off playing fields, a year after advising schools to look at opportunities to dispose of land.

The updated guidance for trusts, governors and local authorities, called "Disposal or change of use of playing field and school land", will go out for consultation soon, the DfE told *Schools Week*.

In the meantime, the Education and Skills Funding Agency wants "more supporting

information from the applicant to understand why the school has to build on existing playing fields", they said.

It follows the DfE releasing guidance in April last year on "good estate management for schools" which said schools could "identify opportunities" to dispose of surplus land and should contact its property company LocatED.

Schools Week analysis of school land disposal decisions shows that there were 49 approved in 2017, up from 25 in 2016 and 22 in

2015. However, only 12 were approved in 2018.

One academy boss, who did not wish to be named, said delays to the free schools programme have prompted a greater number of places to be created by expanding existing school sites.

The updated guidance will also provide information on a new application portal, "ending the currently multiple application form process", a notice on the ESFA's website said last week.

News

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EXCLUSIVE



Controversial 'back of the queue' badge system piloted to tackle misbehaviour and absenteeism

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Pupils without 100 per cent attendance or a clean behaviour record are allegedly being forced to the back of the queue for lunch at a secondary school.

Immanuel College in Bradford, run by the Bradford Diocesan Academy Trust, introduced a new behaviour system in the summer term of last year, in which pupils begin each term with two badges – one for good behaviour, and one for 100 per cent attendance.

Pupils who misbehave or take time off can lose one or both of their badges. But this term the school introduced a new policy that gives lunchtime priority to those pupils who still have both badges, a concerned parent told *Schools Week*.

Pupils with two badges go for lunch first, followed by those who have lost their 100 per cent attendance badge, and then those who have lost their behaviour badge. Pupils who have had both badges removed eat last, it was claimed.

The parent, who did not want to be named, likened the system to the methods used to control behaviour in prisons and said his son has been separated from his friends at lunch as a result of being ill for a few days and losing his attendance badge.

"He was upset about it. He has a small group of friends and doesn't see them, and feels being ill was 'wrong'," he said, adding that the school had not told parents about the change in policy.

Despite repeated requests for comment on the lunchtime prioritisation strategy, the trust refused to give any further details.

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary

of the National Education Union, said perfect attendance "will always be difficult" due to "inevitable absences from school due to illnesses", and said pupils with regular absences should be checked on to ensure they were not facing "serious long-term problems" and should be dealt with in a "supportive way".

Immanuel College joined BDAT in February 2016. A short Ofsted inspection in January found it was still "good" and stated that the school had "rightly identified that the levels of persistent absence for a small number of pupils who are disadvantaged remains too high".

A spokesperson for the school said the badge system had already helped in "raising attendance levels and improving behaviour".

"It is popular with our students who take pride in wearing their badges," she said.

Recent figures show that absence rates are higher for pupils who are eligible for free school meals (7.3 per cent), compared to non-FSM pupils (4.2 per cent). Pupils with a statement of special needs or education, health and care plan also have higher absence rates than their peers.

The BDAT spokesperson added the "incentive programme ... does take into account individual pupil context around attendance and has been designed to highlight to students the importance of attending school". They didn't provide any further details.

Schools have previously faced criticism for using lunchtime restrictions as punishment.

Last year Mount Pleasant Primary School in Shrewsbury was criticised after sending a newsletter to parents warning that pupils would only be offered bread, fruit and water if they had an outstanding lunchtime debt of £6.60 or more.

DfE may put free sanitary products in primary schools

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The government is "considering options" for supporting primary pupils with free sanitary products, following criticism that its current plans to tackle period poverty do not go far enough.

Philip Hammond, the chancellor, announced in his spring statement earlier this month that the government would fund sanitary products in all secondary schools and colleges in England.

Although the announcement was widely welcomed and hailed as a victory for anti-period poverty campaigners, ministers were criticised for not including primary school-age pupils, despite many girls starting to menstruate before they turn 11.

Quizzed by Layla Moran, the Lib Dem's education spokesperson, on what the Department for Education would do to provide free sanitary products to younger pupils, Nadhim Zahawi, the children's minister, said it was considering its options.

"No one should be held back from reaching their potential because of their gender or background," he said in response to a written parliamentary question.

"That is why the chancellor announced in his spring statement that the department will lead a scheme to provide access to free sanitary products in all secondary schools and colleges in England.

"As we develop the plans, we will consider options for primary school children."

Speaking following the original announcement earlier this month, Amika George, a teenaged anti-period poverty campaigner credited with influencing the government's decision, urged ministers to extend the pledge to "all schools".

"Periods should never hold back a child from achieving their true potential, whatever their age."

The National Association for Head Teachers also wants the scheme expanded. "It would be good to see free sanitary products extended to year 6, as many girls start their periods before secondary school," said Paul Whiteman, its general secretary.

News

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What governance strategy? says DfE

JESS STAUFENBERG
@STAUFENBERGJ

EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education appears to have backpedalled on a commitment to publish a governance strategy.

It comes as the governance handbook was updated last Friday, with a new emphasis on trustees needing to demonstrate how the views of parents and communities are used in decision-making.

The move follows criticism that the views of parents have been ignored by some schools and academy trusts, especially larger chains with centralised processes.

The National Governance Association is now urging the government to press on with a governance strategy, saying it was "extremely pleased" that academies minister Lord Agnew had accepted its suggestion to develop one.

However, after initially refusing to provide any information, the DfE called *Schools Week* as we were going to press to confirm they won't be "publishing an actual governance strategy document".

The spokesperson added they are, however, "consulting with stakeholders including the NGA on improving governance".

Emma Knights, chief executive of the NGA, said the DfE had wanted to improve the recruitment and retention of trustees and governors as part of the strategy.

Knights claimed regional schools commissioner Vicky Beer had talked about the upcoming strategy at a recent NGA conference.

She said the NGA had also been lobbying for mandatory training for governors and that clerks should be paid better to improve recruitment.

Meanwhile, in the updated governance handbook published last week, boards were reminded they must be "connected with, and answerable to, the communities they serve, particularly parents and carers".

They also need to build relationships in the community to "create a sense of trust and shared ownership" of the trust's, or school's, strategy.

Boards should also ensure their schools are "regularly communicating with parents and carers, and that parental engagement is used by the board to inform their strategic decision-making".

Knights admitted that governors and trustees "haven't always prioritised listening to parents, staff and pupils as much as we should have".

Stakeholder engagement should officially become the "fourth core function" of governance, alongside setting the ethos of a school, holding heads to account, and having oversight of finances, she added.

Temporary ceasefire in the battle of the bulge, but future fight looms



JESS STAUFENBERG
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The proportion of schools that were full or over capacity fell slightly last year, new data shows, suggesting the government is getting to grips with a bulge in school places.

But a deeper dive into local authority data showed there are major issues ahead: 13 councils expect to be over capacity for school places next year, compared to just one in 2017-18.

Department for Education statistics released yesterday show 15 per cent of secondary schools were full or over-capacity in 2018, down from 16 per cent in 2017.

Education secretary Damian Hinds hailed the figures as showing that the government is "undertaking the biggest expansion in school places in two generations", adding "the statistics show we are well on track to create one million places this decade".

Data from the Local Government Association shows that only Leicester had a too-high proportion of pupil numbers as a percentage of school places, at 101 per cent, last year.

But that is set to rise to 13 councils by 2019-20.

Leicester still faces the biggest squeeze on places, with pupil numbers at 114 per cent of available places, followed by Manchester on 111 per cent, Oldham on 105 per cent and Westminster and Rochdale each on 104 per cent.

In total, the government will have to create 9,751 additional places to meet demand, the LGA's figures show.

Schools Week analysis has also previously shown 54 per cent of the local authorities that

were unsuccessful in bids for special needs and alternative provision schools will have run out of school places by 2021.

The finding led one union to warn that the mismatch between local need and the areas in which the DfE was opening free schools was "extremely concerning". The DfE claims that applications for new schools are always considered according to a robust selection process.

Meanwhile, Thursday's data also revealed the proportion of full or over-capacity primary schools decreased from 23 per cent in 2017 to 21 per cent in 2018.

It showed 59,000 extra primary school places and 37,000 extra secondary school places were added to schools during 2017-18.

The number of unfilled places in primary and secondary schools increased slightly last year.

There were 467,000 unfilled places in primary schools, up 3 per cent from 453,000 in 2017. Overall, 79 per cent of primary schools had one or more unfilled places as of last May.

In secondary schools there were 639,000 unfilled places in 2018, up 0.2 per cent on 2017 when there were 638,000 unfilled places. Eighty-five per cent of secondary schools had one or more unfilled place in 2018.

According to the government, unfilled places can be evidence of local authorities planning ahead for future need.

They can also be attributed to "the building of whole new schools, which fill up from the bottom, leaving space in the upper years until those year groups work their way through".

"In some areas, low or declining need for places will also contribute to the number of unfilled places."

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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If these are Lord Agnew's solutions to the school funding crisis, then we are all doomed

"These findings read like a bad April Fool's Day joke."

That was the reaction of one education leader presented with the findings of our front-page investigation this week.

The academies minister Lord Agnew brazenly declared at a conference last year that his troubleshooters had found £35 million worth of "essentially misdirected resources" after visiting 72 schools and trusts.

That worked out at £500,000 per school, he said, which represented a "colossal" sum of money. It left many headteachers, who claim they've already cut to the bone, scratching their heads.

Ever since his outburst, we've been trying to see the reports to check that Agnew's claims stand up.

The DfE refused our request to see them, stating they were confidential. But they did release the names of schools visited, and some of them shared their reports under the freedom of information act.

What we found makes a mockery of Agnew's claims.

The so-called savings, or opportunities to generate more cash, included pocketing money raised for local charities - specifically, a hospice to help dying

children - limiting lunch portions for pupils, and replacing experienced teachers with support staff (on term-time only contracts).

One of the proposals even suggested saving money on supply costs by teaching three classes at the same time - in the dining room.

Using talented school business professionals to gently probe finances at schools with money problems isn't a bad idea, and schools should no doubt be comparing things like teacher contact ratios and per-teacher spend to see if genuine efficiencies can be made.

But our findings show that this cost-cutting has become too desperate, and is now impacting on educational provision.

Some of the reports even include proposals to look at outsourcing school services, such as cleaning or catering, to save money. The irony of this, when Agnew made much of his fortune outsourcing jobs to India, will not be lost on our sector.

But if this is Agnew's grand masterplan for how our schools should be run - he needs to think again. We agree with union boss Paul Whiteman: "This looks like a system in retreat."



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Profile

CATH MURRAY | @CATHMURRAY_



“Children don’t feel that they’re heard”

Beccy Earnshaw, director, Voice 21

Oracy hit it big on the education agenda earlier this year when Nick Gibb unexpectedly dropped it into a conference speech, causing pundits to speculate whether it might replace phonics as the new darling of the schools minister.

As director of the oracy charity Voice 21, Beccy Earnshaw has seen the power of such pronouncements – the charity’s last conference quickly sold out, for instance. She’s also just landed a meeting with the schools minister, and her organisation is acting as the secretariat for

a new all-party parliamentary group on oracy, which will be chaired by Emma Hardy, a former teacher and now MP for Hull West and Hessle.

Earnshaw is imprinted on my memory, however, as a mass of curly reddish-brown hair that yelled my name, then her own, as I steadied my bike one morning to avoid families walking to school through the Greenwich station underpass in south London.

I pondered the “Cath, it’s Beccy!” mystery for several days before receiving an email apologising for her shrieks and explaining that she lived around the corner from w’s offices, and, yes, she would be glad to take

up my offer of an interview.

When I ring her doorbell two weeks later, I’m fully expecting a bubbly, larger than life northern lass. What comes as a surprise is the ceaseless stream of talk. I attempt to put her at ease by exchanging parenting stories while she makes tea.

There’s a circular feel to Earnshaw’s life, linking the northeast and London.

Born in Newcastle, the 40-year-old spent her secondary school years in Carlisle, did a broadcast journalism degree in Leeds, then moved to the big smoke in 1999 because she “wanted to go on the telly”. She joined “the very

Profile: Beccy Earnshaw

“I’m really conscious of the insurgency of the unheard”

glamorous part of the BBC”, as a “caption monkey” for BBC Parliament, where she had to be able to recognise every MP so that she could bring their name up as soon as they started talking (and resist the temptation to put up ridiculous subtitles when parliament was sitting in the middle of the night and she thought nobody would be watching).

“I loved being in Westminster. It was just amazing and such a buzz. I used to have a pass for the House of Commons and would wander around at night, have my dinner in the Lords’ café and stuff. But then I just got really into the politics of it, and wanting to do something that was more that side of things.”

The Hansard Society fit the bill, and that was where she went next, looking at how to connect people more into politics, and piloting new methods of the public giving evidence, including citizens’ juries, forums, evidence-gathering for select committee inquiries, as well as the emerging world of online consultations.

It was the early days of the reality TV show Big Brother, a massive hit, and the commission decided to run an inquiry into what it could learn from it. “All the political junkies said, ‘Oh, we’ve got nothing to learn from people who like Big Brother, you know, they couldn’t tell us anything.’ Whereas all the Big Brother fans said, ‘I just don’t feel like I know enough about politics, but I think it’s really important. I wish I knew more.’”

She then took a similar role at the Electoral Commission, working on voter awareness and how to get young people involved.

Earnshaw was living with her husband, who works in advertising and whom she met at the age of 11 at her Carlisle secondary school. She tells a story of reconnecting on Twitter with Lisa Pettifer, her former English teacher, and telling her she’d met her husband at school. Her former teacher instantly new who he was. “It was clearly something that was discussed in the staffroom,” she says, slightly embarrassed.

At 29, after a short spell in the Children’s



With broadcaster Jeremy Paxman while working for the Hansard Society



Earnshaw was the club reporter for her local paper, the Carlisle News & Star. She noticed when re-examining this article that she was 17 at the time.

Commissioner’s office, the pregnant Earnshaw moved back to Newcastle and surprised herself and everyone else by landing a job as the first director of the charity Schools NorthEast, which started with a grant from the regional development agency, but now funds itself.

Fresh from Westminster, she was competing against local headteachers approaching retirement and others with long experience in local authorities. Fifteen heads split themselves into two interview panels and ran it like a teacher recruitment day.

“They didn’t know what they wanted,” she says. “I’m still in touch with a lot of the heads and they said it was a really heated discussion afterwards about the fact that I didn’t fit with anything they thought they were going to get, but they were going to take a punt and go a different way.”

“My argument was always that they’re the experts in education. My job was to help them to have a better platform to be able to amplify their voices — somebody who was coming from a different perspective and being able to see which issues would cut through.”

Profile: Beccy Earnshaw

It turned out to be a successful model, giving schools a voice regionally and nationally, and her successor, Mike Parker, is another ex-journalist.

After seven years of her husband commuting to London, they finally decided to come back to the capital.

“I should have sensibly spent some time moving the kids down, settling them in and everything. Eliza, my youngest, was just starting reception, and I’d missed all the deadlines for putting in school applications stuff. And we didn’t know where to live. But me being me, I saw the job at Voice 21, which was in exactly the same state as Schools NorthEast had been. It had been agreed as an idea, but that was it.”

Voice 21 was the brainchild of the founders of School 21, an innovative all-through free school founded in 2012 in east London that has embedded oracy throughout the curriculum. With funding from the Education Endowment Foundation, it had developed an oracy framework with the University of Cambridge and set up a charity to spread what it had learned to other schools. Start-up funding came from Big Change, the youth charity, and Earnshaw was hired to get it off the ground. After two years it works with 500 schools and has 16 employees.

She agrees with Gibb that talk in the classroom should be purposeful and high quality. One of the things Voice 21 does to develop “rich discussion” is to get teachers to assign “talk roles” in group work, with stem sentences for each role. “So the challenger might say, ‘Well, I would argue that...’ or the builder would say, ‘Connecting to your idea, could it be said that...’”

In an EEF pilot in 11 secondary schools, the first thing reported was an improvement in listening, which is vital, Earnshaw says. “If they’re not listening they can’t build on somebody else’s idea.”

Earnshaw is adamant that oracy is part of the key to narrowing the attainment gap. “If children are not in a language-rich home, and they’re not getting the language at school, where do we expect this to come from?”

She has now come full circle and is using the parliamentary structures to get more young people trained in speaking, so that they can participate in public life.

“Children don’t feel that they’re heard. What does that do to their confidence and well-being? The frustration that comes from not being able



Earnshaw’s dad worked for British gas all his career, and paints for pleasure. She poses with one of his paintings of Newcastle from south of the Tyne.



Familiarising MPs with new technology at a Conservative Party Conference in the early 2000s

to express yourself, I think, is one that we see a lot in that link between young people with speech and language needs and people in the criminal justice system. It’s a huge connection. It’s frustrating.

“We often talk in Voice 21 and School 21 about disagreeing agreeably and a lot of the things that are at the heart of what it means to be a civilised society. To value democracy, to be able to deliberate about things, to be able to change your mind, to be able to come to a consensus — these are the type of things that

“If children are not in a language-rich home, then where will it come from?”

we’re teaching every day in classrooms.

“I’m really conscious of the current situation, talking about Brexit – the insurgency of the unheard. I think there is something about who gets heard in our system and who doesn’t, and whose voices are valued and whose are not.

“That’s something I felt very strongly in the northeast, that it was very easy if you were a school that’s doing well in London to be able to rock up at an event in the Department for Education and be heard, and to get the plaudits and all that.

“It’s much more difficult for the school that’s grafting away in the northeast and doing amazing work in challenging circumstances, but never getting seen or heard. With anything we do, I think it’s so important that we look at how do we bring in the whole range of voices and those people who aren’t normally heard.”

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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“High scores” in school accountability measures do not always mean that grammars are better schools, says Ian Widdows

The grammar school debate inevitably triggers passionate responses on both sides.

But many of the arguments put forward share a common factor – an assumption that grammar schools are “superior” to their non-selective, secondary modern neighbours.

A great deal of this is down to the grammar school “brand” (which holds a particular place in the public psyche) and exaggeration of what the data included in school league tables can say about a school.

This bias is so deeply ingrained that even those opposed to selection fall into its trap. Opposition to grammar school expansion is often couched as a phobia of “more secondary moderns!” I have been asked numerous times “why can’t all schools be grammar schools?”; in this sense they are making the words “grammar” and “good” almost interchangeable.

In a letter to Ofsted I asked why grammar schools were so much more likely (currently seven times more likely) to be judged good or outstanding compared with secondary moderns. Its response said a key factor was that grammar schools were more able to recruit “higher calibre” teachers. In my view this is a truly outrageous, simplistic statement that is grounded in these same assumptions. I once suggested a TV programme where teachers from a grammar and a secondary modern swap roles for a week – the results could be telling in terms of which school has the strongest teachers. No



IAN WIDDOWS

Headteacher of Giles Academy, Lincolnshire, and founder of the National Association of Secondary Moderns

Secondary moderns can be great schools too

one has yet taken up the suggestion.

When grammar schools “score higher” in school accountability measures it does not necessarily mean that they are better schools.

They are far more likely to score higher because they are teaching the most academically able students.

number of experts in school data analysis to provide a far greater understanding of what school data can tell us and some of this will be presented at the National Association of Secondary Moderns’ national conference in June.

This is not a problem just with

“ Skewed selection has an impact on outcome measures

Selection skews the intake for grammars and secondary moderns, which has a significant impact on these outcome measures.

A much more nuanced analysis is required. I am working with a

selective areas – it extends into every corner of English education. It is the problem of having a well-established, high-stakes accountability regime that is founded on a few, flawed and



poorly understood metrics. So while Progress 8 has much going for it as a “fairer” measure than some previous ones, it can only ever provide a starting point for discussion about school effectiveness.

The use of such a measure should be combined with a thorough understanding of the nature of the measure and of how a school’s context might have an impact on it.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, seems to support the assumption of grammar school superiority. He has urged grammar heads to take over the running of their “failing” secondary modern neighbours.

There may be benefits for those grammars and secondary moderns who choose to work in partnership, but this is not a one-way street. Both schools can contribute by sharing their individual strengths.

To be clear: secondary moderns can be really great schools.

However, the system is currently stacked against us. It is one of the main reasons that I founded the National Association of Secondary Moderns.

Amanda Spielman, Ofsted’s chief inspector, recently said: “We need to stop talking about numbers and start talking about education.”

This, with the new draft Ofsted framework, suggests the start of a welcome move away from an over-reliance on school data as the way to judge schools and a chance for all schools, whether grammar, secondary modern or comprehensive, to be judged much more fairly on their merits.

Opinion

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BECKY WHITE

Education policy adviser, Adoption UK



You can take the child out of the trauma, but ...

Ofsted's new framework must recognise the enormous hurdles that some children have to overcome, says Becky White

Jade* often ate until she was sick. In between meals, the three-year-old sneaked leftovers out of the bin. Even after six months in foster care in my home, with regular meals and snacks and cupboards always full, her fear of going hungry did not leave her.

Then there was the eight-month-old who never cried, the four-year-old who would go off with any stranger and the five-year-old who picked up a small television to throw at me. As a foster carer I quickly learned that the devastating impact of child abuse, neglect and loss plays out daily.

Later, as an adoptive parent, I learned that this impact does not disappear, even after years in a loving home. You can take the child out of the trauma, but it's not so easy to take the impact of trauma out of the child.

This is a reality that faces education professionals every day.

Tens of thousands of children arrive in school with essential building blocks of their development missing. Before they learn their first letters, there is a gulf of disadvantage between them and their securely attached, school-ready peers.

In the classroom we might

see speech and language delay, physical delay, hyper-vigilance, poor impulse control, sensory processing difficulties, and a tendency to jump to flight-fight-freeze responses at the slightest provocation.

There may be diagnoses of foetal alcohol spectrum disorders, reactive

attachment disorder, or complex PTSD. Many children quickly earn a notorious reputation that can follow them throughout their education.

The new draft Ofsted framework rightly recognises that care-experienced children (including adopted children) constitute a group that is "most disadvantaged". They are more likely to be excluded, to leave school with no qualifications and significantly less likely to access higher education.

Yet Ofsted could go further in recognising the enormous hurdles that some children have to overcome. While there is acknowledgement that some children may display challenging behaviour, the only offered solution seems to be even more consistency in the application of consequences. No amount of consequences will reverse the lifelong

brain damage of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

The previous category of "personal development, behaviour and welfare" has become "behaviour and attitudes". Personal development

live in an ideal world.

This is not about letting children "get away with it", but if we are really going to change the trajectory of our most challenging children, we need to think about the complex drivers of behaviour. Children whose brains have been damaged by prenatal alcohol exposure, or who have been wired for survival at all costs by their earliest experiences, will need more than a neatly crafted system of escalating consequences. They will need patient, supportive adults employing a range of strategies to help them to overcome their difficulties.

There is funding to support this. Care-experienced children in England attract pupil premium-plus to counteract the disadvantage caused not by poverty, but by adverse childhood experiences. Ofsted must ensure that all schools understand this funding's purpose and that all eligible children are benefiting from it. If not, we risk throwing away almost £200 million annually, while continuing to fail a generation of children who have already been terribly let down.

*not her real name

“ We need to think about the complex drivers of behaviour ”

is now separate, and welfare has disappeared.

When children's welfare – social, physical and emotional – is attended to they are in a much better position to learn, to behave appropriately and to engage in all that school has to offer.

On the other hand, "behaviour and attitudes" can easily be interpreted as something that is the child's responsibility. Now, the onus is on the child to "behave", rather than on the adult to "support".

We carefully and patiently teach children to read. If they do not learn at the same pace as the other children, we seek to discover the causes of that and find solutions. Behaviour is no different.

In an ideal world, we might expect parents to have already taken care of it. Sadly, many children do not

Opinion

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STEPHEN MORALES

Institute of School Business Leadership

No to cost-cutting, yes to optimisation

Stephen Morales points out that there is an important distinction between efficiency in the context of austerity and the optimisation of available resources regardless of the fiscal backdrop.

The role of the school business leader is to work with the resources that are available and to make sure they stretch as far as possible in the interests of the learning community that we serve. Irrespective of the economic backdrop, we should be promoting a culture of optimisation, not cost-cutting as some kind of demonstration exercise.

In the current context of tightening budgets, the School Resource Management Adviser (SRMA) initiative is the Department for Education's way of supporting schools that are financially vulnerable. This is comparable to national leaders of education or governance who support colleagues with their approach to school improvement and governance. It is not designed to be an additional form of inspection through a financial lens, and there is no intention to make a formal judgement on schools or trusts.

The department was originally

considering using large commercial audit or consultancy firms to carry out the SRMA function, and it is good that they were persuaded away from this idea. SRMA advisors include practising school business

leaders, head teachers, CEOs and governors who have been put forward by diverse groups including NAHT, ASCL, CST and CIPFA.

SRMAs have perhaps been unfairly characterised as an army of cost-cutters. Rather, these practitioners are passionate education leaders in their own right, with a strong belief that improving children's life chances is at the core of their professional existence. They see this as important professional development activity, bringing experience from their own context and sharing it with colleagues in the true spirit of system leadership.

The Institute of School Business Leadership's (ISBL) role in the SRMA initiative includes oversight of the accreditation of practitioners who

are then deployed to support schools. Whilst these advisers are managed by a group of supplier organisations, they operate on behalf of the DfE, and the resulting recommendations are then a matter for the school and DfE officials to discuss and negotiate.

ISBL did not enter into this project in the belief that improving the bottom line trumps the quality of education. We believe there is an important distinction between efficiency in the context of austerity and the optimisation of available resources whatever the fiscal backdrop.

The advice offered by the SRMAs should centre around three broad areas: a) curriculum ambition,

“ SRMAs have perhaps been unfairly characterised as an army of cost-cutters

b) operations costs (including salaries) and c) income. If a+b consistently exceeds c, then the idea is to prioritise spending to ensure longer term sustainability. SRMAs will reference national benchmark data to identify particular areas of focus but should always be considerate to context. The quality of provision should always be maintained, and it is entirely for the school/trust to determine whether or not recommendations are appropriate for their setting.

This should be seen as a consensual and collaborative process where school leaders and their trustees/governors should feel at liberty to challenge recommendations and defend

their management decisions. However, where suggested improvements and changes are considered to be both reasonable and appropriate, then the expectation is that recommendations will be adopted.

Beyond the SRMA initiative, ISBL is trying hard to build consensus across the sector on an approach to resource management and the optimum deployment of talent. Linked to this are the ethical considerations focusing on the impact of leadership decisions on the communities that we serve and, more broadly, on society. We must at all costs resist decisions that are motivated by self-interest or preserving the status quo. Abdul Chohan, co-founder of The Olive Tree Free School, refers to the six most expensive words in education being “we've always done it that way”.

We can argue about whether or not there is sufficient funding in the system to achieve all the things we want. We can argue about whether or not government policy currently is creating barriers to the success of some of our children. We can also argue that the current funding arrangements are putting unreasonable pressure on the education workforce. The campaign for a better funding deal for education should continue in the background. Nevertheless, in many respects, the skills of a school business leader come to the fore when educational organisations are under particular funding pressures.

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Leading on Pastoral Care

By Daniel Sobel

Published by Bloomsbury

Reviewed by Sam Sheedy, assistant head for behaviour, Thomas Tallis School, south London

I have to admit to being annoyed that I didn't write this book... or, even better, that I wasn't able to read it earlier in my career. It would have saved me a huge amount of time over the 13 years that I have spent teaching.

The author starts by making a clear social justice argument supported by research and statistics, giving school leaders the tools to make an economic case for spending on pastoral care.

He also sets out his ideological position early, and statements such as "children's 'misbehaviour' is nearly always caused by an adult" may put off champions of the no-excuses approach, which is a shame as there is a lot of value in the research-based content of this book.

One big plus-point is the way it champions pastoral work, offering the kind of morale boost that these staff sorely need. Every chapter ends with a box called "Looking after yourself", offering practical suggestions such as how to protect yourself against unfounded accusations of inappropriate conduct; when you might need to debrief with a colleague; where to set your limits (do you buy food for a hungry child? If you're doing a house visit to a young carer and the house is unhygienic, do you help them to clean up?).

Another useful feature is the "reflective question" boxes. They include all kinds of questions relevant to each chapter, such as: "How often are parents invited to take part in the school's decision-making forum?" or "How clear

are your school's guidelines around SEN?"

Whether intentional or not, the book models the coaching-based approach pastoral leaders need to deploy, which is intelligent and adds depth.

Examples are given of the type of paperwork, meetings and differentiation approaches pastoral leaders may encounter, and although some content will appear common sense for the more experienced reader, the range covered means there will be something for everyone.

The rise of the "omniteacher" as a solution for society's failings means all staff need to understand behaviour as a language of communication. "It is essential to avoid confusing 'need' for 'challenging behaviour,'" Sobel says, "as trying to get certain behaviours to stop without providing for the child's underlying needs is a recipe for disaster."

The book clearly frames an approach that I have previously learned as "trauma-informed practice", where dialogue and restorative work are at the heart of everything. Here they are broken down in a way that lends itself to designing whole-school inset training. The clear structure is a great timesaver.

In short, the book is a good tool for those who want

to engender progress in their charges.

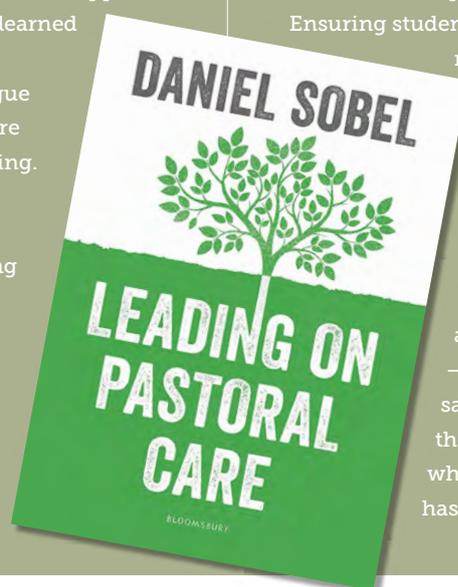
There is a careful balance to be struck with behaviour management, however, and I disagree with the author's views on the use of internal exclusion.

Schools are models for society and students need to have a clear and multi-staged consequence mechanism. There is a place for isolation in schools; the author suggests there isn't. We have an internal exclusion room. Needs are met and the completion rate is high; our fixed-term exclusions are half the national average for secondary schools, despite serving a challenging community. I don't disagree with the author that these arrangements may not be beneficial for all, but schools run on perception. There are 1,900 young people in our building and having clear consequences for actions keeps them safe.

I line-manage six fantastic pastoral leaders ("first-class" according to Ofsted) and have learned many aspects addressed in the book as a result of being part of an excellent leadership team.

Ensuring student needs are met is the

most important thing a school can do – meeting these needs by hook or by crook is the essence of pastoral care. The book provides tactics and strategy in abundance, although – as the author himself says in chapter one – the issue will surely be whether a pastoral lead has the time to read it.



Research

Every month the Research Schools Network – run by the Education Endowment Foundation and Institute for Effective Education – shares some advice from a research-based initiative it has implemented

Improving the oral language skills of disadvantaged pupils

**Jo Ashcroft, director,
Aspirer Research School**

One barrier common to disadvantaged pupils across our trust is poor oral language and communication skills on entry. Aspirer Research School is based within a multi-academy trust of ten primary schools across the northwest (most with above-average proportions of disadvantaged pupils).

We use a range of diagnostic tools to assess pupils' language skills, including Wellcomm and Talk Boost assessments, question-level analysis of reading papers, a general comprehension rubric tool, writing assessments and moderation.

This data has consistently illustrated large gaps in oral language for disadvantaged pupils (often less than 10 per cent begin their reception year in line with age-related expectations). This and a narrower vocabulary remain a barrier for many throughout the primary years. Our response was a collective drive to engage with the evidence and decide upon approaches to accelerate these pupils' progress.

We began by looking at the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) guidance reports. Recommendation 1 in all the reports (*Improving Literacy in KS1*, *Improving Literacy in KS2* and, most recently, *Preparing for Literacy*) relates to the development of oral language capability. We initially pushed vocabulary, as our data showed this as a priority, and focused upon what the guidance reports recommended. Some of the key points were:

- language acquisition must be a high priority in schools with explicit strategies for extending vocabulary as well as a language-rich environment;
- careful selection of language to be taught (tier 2 language – high frequency words found in many different contexts);
- activities to extend pupils' expressive

and receptive vocabulary should relate to current topics, with opportunities to practise using new vocabulary;

- language teaching should develop breadth (vocabulary size) and depth (understanding and use in context).

We then looked at the EEF Toolkit's Oral Language Interventions section and found these to have an average impact of +5 months with an extensive evidence base (11 meta-analyses).

Finally, we reviewed the interventions that had been evaluated on the Evidence4Impact website.

This provided us with a sound rationale on which to base our choices and we began exploring interventions that aligned with the research recommendations and would meet our need. We selected Word Aware, which includes careful selection of vocabulary to be taught; daily teaching of vocabulary in the context of topics, literacy or concepts; new vocabulary taught phonologically, semantically and syntactically; and language activated and reviewed within the environment.

Having chosen the system, we looked at how to implement it. Each academy wrote a plan based on the EEF's *Putting the Evidence to Work: A Schools' Guide to Implementation*, identifying their active ingredients and implementation activities. Each academy championed the approach, ensured that

implementation activities were carried out, and monitored and evaluated the impact, in terms of the quality of the implementation (fidelity, acceptability, reach, cost) and the impact on pupil outcomes.

The impact has been huge. Our disadvantaged students can now access the curriculum effectively and confidently, in contrast to previous years before the interventions were adopted. The approach was adopted with fidelity, has been accepted positively by staff and pupils, and is now reaching all pupils in the schools.

Implementation was not expensive, with the ongoing cost simply being the up-front training and follow-on support for new staff. Two schools who have used Word Aware for the past two years have seen positive results for their disadvantaged pupils – they have achieved above the standards of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

At Underwood West Academy, Crewe, 74 per cent of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (an increase from a school combined measure of 7 per cent in 2016), with progress measures for their disadvantaged pupils of +0.8 in reading and +1.5 in writing. At Ash Grove Academy, Macclesfield, 88 per cent of disadvantaged pupils achieved the combined expected standard, with progress measures for their disadvantaged pupils of +1.9 in reading and +0.4 in writing.



Reviews



Amir Arezoo is vice-principal of Horizon Community College, Barnsley

@WORKEDGECHAOS

This is interleaving: a concrete example
@MrTSci409

I am an advocate of evidence-based practice. The problem is the number of filters (blogs, presentations, conversations, books etc) from the original source (ie, the academic literature). The greater variety of filters and media through which the evidence is presented, the greater likelihood of misconceptions – all of which Ian Taylor addresses in his excellent blog about interleaving.

As he says: “Too many diagrams ... create the misconception that you should teach different topics each consecutive lesson”. Instead, by going back to the research (eg, Bjork and Bjork on desirable difficulty), Taylor presents a more nuanced and structured approach so that “you are delivering content which has contrast to enable students to see the underlying principles across these different examples” – ie, look beyond the surface structures that students can often get tied up in.

Curriculum: a team effort
@jon_hutchinson_

Curriculum has been a hot conversational topic from the days of logic, grammar and rhetoric up to the modern herald of

TOP BLOGS of the week

the digital native. But as Jon Hutchinson rightly says: “In the meantime, we still have to stand in front of the children on Monday and deliver some lessons. Are we getting it right?”

It’s a fantastic question and Hutchinson is right to be concerned that “there isn’t so much of what these new supercharged curricula will look like in practice.”

He sets out how a subject curriculum can be “intended, implemented and enacted” – and that it must go in this order. It strikes me that whatever the agenda for curriculum development, the intended curriculum must be heavily tied into the vision and ethos of the school that enacts it. Otherwise, dropping curriculum structure and content into a school will have the same outcomes as the many acronym-heavy strategies listed.

Managing management: a couple of tips and tricks for managing behaviour
@adamboxer1

It’s easy to forget that as much as we are teachers of ideas, concepts and skills, we are also teachers of behaviour, social norms and relations. I’ll admit that there are still times where I tell myself “I should have handled that better”, but as Adam Boxer points out, planning for student behaviour

is more effective than managing it in the moment.

“I realised that there were certain things they would do at certain times, and I learnt to anticipate these things...”

Boxer rightly indicates that behaviour management is as much about the cues and signals we (consciously or otherwise) employ as much as it is about routines and structures of a lesson.

Whatever one’s views on behaviour management methods, it’s always easy to forget that “... you aren’t alone. We’ve all been there, we’ve all struggled.” I’d go as far as to say that no teacher has behaviour management truly licked, no matter how long they’ve been in the classroom or what position they have. We are always learning.

Self-efficacy
@mrcranepe

Grit, resilience, growth mindset – however we frame the necessity for students to self-regulate as learners, it’s also important to understand the barriers to achieving this ideal state.

James Crane frames, then breaks down, self-efficacy as a means of enabling metacognitive strategies to take effect. In order that students can “typically exhibit an awareness of the degree of challenge in the task they are attempting and are able to draw on their metacognitive resources to overcome any obstacles with the task”, Crane suggests ways that teachers can work to make this happen.

Most pertinent was the reference to scaffolding: rather than make scaffolding explicit in task completion, “these should cause thinking and be faded away over time to support students with completing tasks independently...”

Students meet our expectations – and if we continue to give the scaffolds before they’re necessary, are we continuing to lower our expectations of those who need the highest of high?

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The DfE doesn't like its own GCSE pass thresholds, claims Forgotten Third inquiry chair

John Bald, comment

A grade 3 is a near miss, but part of the problem is the content of GCSE English and maths, which does not focus closely enough on basic competence. Trig for foundation, for example, is pointless, and there is too much literary interpretation in the English paper. If you want to certify competence, that's a good idea. There is no point in certifying incompetence.

Government consults on plans to withdraw funding for BTECs

James Coope, comment

T- levels are doomed from the start, too big and too difficult for the likely students who will undertake this behemoth of a qualification. BTECs were what was left after the Conservative coalition scuppered the advanced diplomas, just as we got them to work smoothly!

They screwed a working apprenticeship system by cutting funding and expecting employers to fill the gap.

The student capabilities and quality gap between who the DfE imagines would undertake these qualifications and the real students that often end up doing them is vast. They design these qualifications with grade A* people in mind when the reality is often C/ D.

BUT, given good support and engagement, the "lesser" cohort will often succeed and surpass their better-educated peers in the medium term.

However, in this FE climate of cuts and reductions in staffing due to lower pay, poor respect and massive workloads, even this outcome is in jeopardy.

Ten things schools can do to address the climate crisis

Tom Burkard, comment

Schools jeopardise their status as genuine community institutions when they encourage political activism involving contentious issues. We are setting a very bad precedent – who is to say what issues will become popular in the future?

By all means children should learn about the problems mankind faces, but they should be given access to contrarian views and allowed to make their own decisions. Turning issues into moral crusades does nothing to promote good scholarship.

REPLY OF THE WEEK **Nicola Perkins**

Bradford trust in 'unprecedented' pay and conditions change

All credit to Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust which is discharging its responsibility to mitigate job losses through what to me sounds a fair and reasonable proposal.

Varying T & Cs is never easy, but for comparison

purposes, having been involved in the All Wales negotiations for a Common Contract for Further Education, the unions (including NASUWT) signed off on a package that included employers giving lecturers a two-month contractual notice period (unless statutory entitlement was greater).

The reality is that paid holiday for the summer would still be due, so isn't it highly unlikely that any teachers would be left without pay during the summer months? I'd be interested to know what cost-saving suggestions these unions have come up with as an alternative means of avoiding redundancies.



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

Listen to parents before making decisions, DfE tells school governors

Tony Breslin, @UKpolicywatch

A pity that, through its reforms, the DfE has consistently reduced opportunities for/marginalised parental engagement in governance and school life!

Holland Park spends £15,000 on luxury Farrow & Ball paint

Jeni Hooper, @JeniHooper

Need Jo Malone candles to create the right atmosphere evidently. Beyond parody and enraging when so many schools are struggling to meet children's needs.

Dan W, @dannypica

Sounds like in the scheme of the setting this is pretty much what anyone would expect. To be rated outstanding and to have such a great school I don't see the issue. As they say, you don't put diesel in a Ferrari (or at least I don't think you do!)

WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

FRIDAY

Everyone knows Jonathan Slater is a sociable chap, but the DfE permanent secretary's latest meetings log makes for interesting reading.

Most notably, Slater met with renowned judge Sir Brian Leveson, he of Leveson Inquiry fame, last year – presumably to push for restrictions on what the education press can write about his department.

(Only kidding Jonno, we know you're a big *Schools Week* fan)

Now, we know civil servants are a frugal bunch, and transparency documents show that DfE staff mostly travelled in standard class on their town trips between October and December last year.

There was one exception, though. Step forward Paul Kett, a director general at the DfE, who flew business class to China last November for a six-day trip as part of the government's Shanghai maths exchange, at a cost of £4,422.

To be fair, Kett was sent on behalf of ministers and the business case for the trip was signed off by Slater. Shame the exchange turned out to be such a damp squib!

TUESDAY

Given the recent move by Ofsted to beef up its research operation (at a cost of £2.4 million over two years), you'd think the watchdog would be ready to tackle new evaluation projects in-house.

Not so, apparently, when it comes to research on parental engagement.

According to spending records published today, Ofsted shelled out £58,500 to Public First, a think tank founded by former Conservative government advisers and husband-and-wife-team Rachel Wolf and James Frayne for "professional services".

When asked about the spending, Ofsted revealed that following an official tender process, Public First was asked to provide data on "two initial areas": the response from parents to suggested changes to Ofsted reports, and the questions asked in the Parent View survey.

"We drew on their expertise as Ofsted does not have the in-house capability to carry out and analyse this work," said a spokesperson.

Besides the usual questions about money handed out to the government's supporters and cheerleaders, one might be tempted to ask where the £2.4 million research budget went...

Meanwhile, in the House of Lords, Conservative peer Lord Forsythe didn't seem impressed with a response from education minister Lord Agnew when he asked about delays to support for pupils with special educational needs.

The politician exhibited what can only be described as some Emily Maitlis-grade side-eye as Agnew burred about "listening and improving all the time".

WEDNESDAY

Ed tech conferences are hardly the stuff of a minister's dreams, but Nadhim Zahawi was delighted to be at an event organised by the Education Policy Institute this week, which

seemed to provide the children's minister with a little escapism.

Alas, Zahawi was only able to speak for about nine minutes before heading back to a parliament gridlocked by Brexit.

"I deeply wish to stay with you for the whole day and get away from that madness at Westminster," he cried whilst legging it out the door.

THURSDAY

The Confederation of School Trusts, the academy sector's newest cheerleader, opted to theme its spring conference on "effective, accountable and ethical governance".

Interesting, then, to discover that no representatives of the usually ubiquitous National Governance Association appeared on any of the panels.

Could it be that CST is trying to seize some ground from the NGA, considered the foremost knowledge on governance issues?

She may be the Hermione Grainger of the education world, but it turns out Amanda Spielman hasn't been keeping up with her homework.

The chief inspector of schools admitted on twitter that she'd lost her streak on education data collection app Teacher Tapp.

She was responding to claims by a maths teacher that he hadn't stayed on top of his use of the app, which asks teachers to log in once a day to answer simple survey questions, because Ofsted was keeping him so busy.

The irony!



Assistant Principal

Salary: L12-16 (£52,413-£57,933) | Available from September 2019

Permanent position

This is an exciting new role created through the continued expansion and investment in Secondary schools within the Eastern Multi-Academy Trust.

Primarily based at King's Lynn Academy the successful postholder will also support the provision of science at King Edward VII Academy, also in King's Lynn.

This is a fantastic opportunity for an existing high quality Head of Department, or existing Assistant Principal, with a proven track record of improving attainment. This leadership post would suit applicants looking to embark on the next step of their senior leadership career.

The successful candidate will inspire and motivate students to ensure that they achieve their full potential. You will be engaging, enigmatic and enthusiastic while maximising the enjoyment, engagement

and outcomes of young people within the faculty. You will develop innovative, non-traditional approaches to the subject matter in order to ensure appropriate access and achievement for all students.

By getting to know every student well and providing the assistance each person needs to succeed, we create a strong community where our staff and students truly pull together

In addition to holding Assistant Principal responsibilities this role will play a key part in developing the science curriculum by acting as the trust lead for science.

To apply visit www.eastern-mat.co.uk/vacancies

Closing date 19th April 2019 (3pm).



Chief Executive Officer Learning without Limits Academy Trust

Start date: 27th August 2019.

£113,782 - £119,541

Based at The Lancaster Academy, Leicester

The current and founding CEO of Learning without Limits Academy Trust is retiring this year and the Trustees are seeking to appoint a successor who shares the values and ambitions of the Trust.

We are looking for a dynamic and suitably experienced candidate who is passionate about improving the life chances of children, especially disadvantaged children, and is someone for whom our values and ethos resonate.

For an informal chat about the position, please contact **Denise Newsome**, CEO, on **07801- 819565**.

For an application pack please contact **Sally Oakes**, HR Admin on **0116 2221616 ext 149** or soakes@babington.leicester.sch.uk. Alternatively please see our website www.lwlat.org.uk for more details.

Completed applications to be sent via email to dnewsome@lwlat.org.uk or **Denise Newsome, CEO, The Lancaster Academy, Knighton Lane East, Leicester, LE2 6FU**

Closing date: Monday 8th April 12noon.



AIM
ACADEMIES TRUST
TRANSFORMING TRADITION



Are you dedicated to transforming life chances of young people?

Will you help to create the next generation of leaders?

Do you want to join AIM Academies Trust as part of the 'Founding Transformation Team' of a new North London secondary academy?

AIM Academies Trust (AIMAT) are delighted to have been appointed by the DfE as the new sponsor of an academy in North London to take it on a journey of transformation. AIMAT will open this new academy in September 2019.

The vision is simple at AIMAT: all young people will become 'Leaders for Tomorrow'. Leaders who determine their own destiny, leaders of their communities and leaders of their chosen career.

- Determining their own destiny means AIMAT young people are in control of their futures. They have a strong moral compass and clear direction in pursuing their life goals.
- Leading in their communities means AIMAT young people selflessly serve their families, their local, national and global communities.
- Leading in their chosen career means AIMAT young people are prepared to enter a profession with prospects and to flourish and thrive within it.

AIMAT has a simple and robust transformation strategy planned for this new academy. Firstly, to rapidly improve behaviour and attendance. Secondly, to rapidly improve the quality of the curriculum and finally to ensure the quality of teaching is consistently exemplary in every classroom. AIMAT will open with an experienced and skilful 'Founding Transformation Team' who will be part of supporting the academy in becoming the world class institution that we know it can be.

AIMAT hopes to demonstrate a sharp rise in the outcomes for all young people in this new academy over the coming months and years. We are looking forward to working closely with parents and the local community in order to achieve this. AIMAT are excited by the challenge ahead.

"There is a rare opportunity to be part of the Founding 'AIMAT Transformation Team'. AIMAT will open this new academy with a centrally recruited 'Transformation Team' to lead the significant changes needed within this new academy. We are assembling a truly exceptional team of teachers and leaders who are driven by a shared moral purpose."

We do not underestimate the magnitude, nor the importance, of the job at hand. It will require huge amounts of perseverance and a constant drive for innovative excellence. However, these roles will also be incredibly rewarding and will offer exciting progression for the future.

If you share our core belief in a growth mindset, have a relentless focus on high standards and operate with the utmost professional integrity and humility, then we would love to hear from you. Equally, if you know other colleagues for whom this challenge would resonate, and who have a proven track record of excellence, then feel free to put them in touch with us (and let us know that you have referred them).

We have vacancies available at all levels from Deputy Principal to Trainee teachers and are recruiting now. If you are interested in any of these opportunities then please apply via the application form on our website www.aimacademies.org. We would be delighted to have an informal conversation prior to application and/or arrange a visit of our flagship school, London Academy, where many of the team currently work. To arrange this please get in touch via email at info@aimacademies.org or call to speak to **Paddy Mcgrath, CEO AIMAT on 07920189106**.

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PRINCIPAL
£59,265 to £68,667 per year

The Inspire Learning Partnership is seeking to appoint a Principal at Kanes Hill Primary School. The Trust is looking for an exceptional candidate to develop this outstanding, inclusive school and champion its collaborative work with the Inspire Learning Partnership and the local community. This is an exciting opportunity for a senior leader who has the passion and expertise to lead Kanes Hill Primary School to reach its true potential.

If you are interested in visiting the school the Executive Principal will be available on **Thursday 28th March 2019 (10am - 11.30am)** and would welcome the opportunity to meet you

Please contact the Executive Principal's PA at principalrecruitment@ilpartnership.org if would like to be included in the visit.

Closing Date: Monday 1st April 2019 at noon

Interview Dates: Wednesday 24th and Thursday 25th April 2019

www.inspirelearningpartnership.org
www.kaneshillsch.net

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Involvement, Achievement & Care

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- 1. Deputy Head – Behaviour & Attendance**
- 2. Deputy Head – Quality of Education**

If you are a highly effective leader, with an exceptional understanding of pedagogy and are committed to raising standards, then please apply to join our forward thinking team.

For further details and an application pack please visit the school website:

www.blatchingtonmill.org.uk/vacancies-list

Closing date: Wednesday, 3rd April 2019 (12 noon)

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