

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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

'Ofsted misunderstands the concept of curriculum'



Emails reveal trust DID 'flatten the grass'



P13

The experienced teachers being off-rolled



P5

Pensions exodus could hit state sector



P7

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## COUNCIL SUING TRUST FOR £4M



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## Harris: We did not game the system

- Top trust entered hundreds of native speakers for ESOL qualification
- Former Ofsted director had labelled the practice 'pure gaming'
- But Harris said pupils were entered for 'real-exam' prep, not boosting scores

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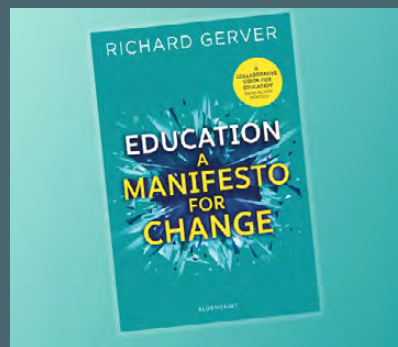
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## Editor's top picks



**Emma Hardy: Turning the education committee red, one comrade at a time**

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**Less of a manifesto and more wisps of smoke from the neighbour's barbecue**

P23

## Goodbye Jess and Cath - we'll miss you!



*Schools Week* commissioning editor Cath Murray and senior reporter Jess Staufenberg will leave the newspaper this week.

Murray joined the publication in 2016 as deputy editor before becoming its features editor and then commissioning editor and head of digital. In her various roles she has been instrumental

in the establishment of *Schools Week* as an industry-leading newspaper for the school sector.

She is leaving to head up a team looking at alternative provision policy at the Centre for Social Justice think tank.

Staufenberg also joined in 2016 and in three years as a reporter has earned plaudits for her investigative work, particularly on the issue of inclusion and special educational needs education. She moves on to a freelance career, based in the north of England. (Staufenberg will also be working for *Schools Week* in a freelance capacity next month).

Both of these talented journalists have been integral members of the *Schools Week* family, and will be sorely missed.



## Investigation

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## Harris swamps ESOL exam with native English speakers

JESS STAUFENBERG

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EXCLUSIVE

A top trust last year entered hundreds of native English speakers into a qualification intended for pupils with English as a second language.

In February Luke Tryl (pictured), then Ofsted's director of strategy, warned that the watchdog was looking at secondary schools entering native speakers into the Cambridge International level 1/2 certificate in English for Speakers of Other Languages.

The entries were "pure gaming", he said, but he would not reveal which schools were under the microscope.

A *Schools Week* analysis has now found that six of the 10 schools with the most entries last year, compared with their number of English as an additional language (EAL) pupils at the end of key stage 4, belonged to the Harris Federation.

If each entry counted as one year 11 pupil, then at least 98 per cent of the GCSE cohort at each school sat the exam.

The qualification, which was dropped from performance tables this year, counted in the open "third" bucket of Progress 8 last year.

Accountability experts suggested it could be used as a back-up or substitute for other third bucket subjects, potentially boosting scores.

Tom Richmond, the founder of the think tank EDSK, said if any school was "filling up their Progress 8 slot with ESOL qualifications" instead of creative and vocational subjects, pupils could miss out on a broad and balanced curriculum.

Heads might also enter pupils to improve the scores of pupils struggling in their other third bucket subjects.



Luke Tryl

However, a spokesperson for Harris said the qualification was not used to count towards the open third bucket, adding that the schools were "categorically not gaming the system".

"Gaming would only occur if a school systematically entered for ESOL to fill an open bucket space which would not otherwise be filled, for students who didn't need this course because they were not EAL."

Harris said if you excluded ESOL from its Progress 8 scores last year, the overall score is "only three hundredths of a grade less" (from the current +0.46 with ESOL to +0.43 without). However this implies the qualification must have counted in some pupils' progress scores.

The trust-wide progress figure also covers all its 26 secondaries – meaning any rises at the six schools identified in our analysis may not show up.

Harris did not provide individual progress data for the six schools.

The spokesperson added headteachers entered pupils in the qualification in the November exam series because its literacy skills were a "useful preparation for English exams" and gave them real-exam experience before GCSEs.

The federation stopped entering pupils for the qualification this year. The spokesperson said this was not because the qualification had been removed from league tables, but because Ofsted had warned in September 2017 that entering native speakers could be perceived as "gaming".

The schools were doing "their own internally designed version" of the qualification instead.

An Ofsted spokesperson said that it was looking into "a range of qualification and entry patterns to identify where schools may be using qualifications inappropriately". That included the ESOL qualification.

"It would not be appropriate for us to comment more specifically at this time. However, this work is in progress and we will report on all instances where evidence of gaming is found."

Inspectors have rated all four of the six Harris schools either "outstanding" or "good". The other two haven't yet been inspected.

The "outstanding" Harris Academy Falconwood in Kent had just 15 non-English speaking pupils, but 177 entries to the ESOL qualification – the same number as the entire year group.

Ormiston Denes Academy in Suffolk, run by the Ormiston Academies Trust, had just six EAL pupils but 52 entries for the ESOL exam.

An Ormiston spokesperson said it entered a "small number of pupils with low prior attainment" for the qualification and had explained this decision to inspectors during a monitoring inspection.

Cambridge International, the exam board which delivers the qualification, said the qualification was "for students for whom English is a second language".

## TOP 10 SCHOOLS WITH BIGGEST GAP BETWEEN EAL PUPILS AND ESOL ENTRIES

ACADEMY TRUST	EAL PUPILS END OF KEY STAGE 4	ESOL ENTRIES ACROSS ALL COHORTS	GAP BETWEEN EAL PUPILS AND ESOL ENTRIES	TOTAL PUPILS END OF KEY STAGE 4	* ESOL ENTRIES AS % OF COHORT
Harris Academy Falconwood	15	177	-162	177	100%
Harris Academy Orpington	8	153	-145	148	103%
Harris Garrard Academy	30	139	-109	130	107%
Harris Academy Beckenham	48	152	-104	152	100%
Meden School	3	80	-77	117	68%
Harris Academy Peckham	47	111	-64	112	99%
Swallow Hill Community College	38	101	-63	108	94%
Harris Boys' Academy East Dulwich	67	126	-59	127	99%
Ormiston Denes Academy	6	52	-46	184	28%
Harborne Academy	60	98	-38	100	98%

\*Pupils can be entered more than once



# 'I lost my job to help the head save £150,000'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

INVESTIGATES

Hundreds of teachers have seen experienced colleagues forced out to make room for cheaper workers, new data has revealed, as a union acknowledged older staff were put under "intense pressure" to leave their jobs.

A survey by Teacher Tapp of 3,568 school staff found that 10 per cent were "confident" that teachers on the upper pay scale at their school had been encouraged to leave or had been made redundant to clear space for cheaper staff.

A further 13 per cent said they felt experienced teachers "might have been" pushed out.

Earlier this month *Schools Week* revealed an academy trust was told by a government cost-cutting adviser to "replace a retiring teacher on UPS3 (upper pay scale 3) with a member of support staff on a term-time only contract".

Chris Keates, the general secretary of the NASUWT union, warned of older teachers "being disproportionately placed on capability procedures, denied access to professional development, subject to excessive observation and scrutiny, having pay awards and pay progression withheld and put under intense pressure to leave their job".

Meanwhile, current and former teachers have told *Schools Week* of how they were forced out, bullied or denied opportunities to progress by schools desperate to keep costs down.

One teacher, who did not want to be named, told *Schools Week* that she and two others on the upper pay scale were forced out by the headteacher of her previous school and replaced by teaching assistants and newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

"[The headteacher] got rid of us to save £150,000. He put a teaching assistant in to replace me, and replaced the other two staff with NQTs. He said he was protecting those on the main pay scale and leadership pay scale, and so it was us three UPS teachers who were costing him too much."

Susan Cavanagh, a former supply teacher from Hull who trained as a mature student,



said she had struggled to get full-time jobs or hold down supply roles because she was paid on the main pay scale.

"It's just this ridiculous situation where the older you seem to get in teaching, the less they value your experience," she said. "It's absolutely heartbreaking."

The Employment Rights Act 1996 sets out an obligation on the employer to show that the reason for dismissal is either conduct, capacity, redundancy or "some other substantial reason of a kind such as to justify dismissal".

Chris Billington, a partner in the education team at Wrigleys Solicitors, previously told *Schools Week* that a restructure based on financial grounds would fall under the "other" category.

"It's very easy to get a cheaper teacher in, but it may well have an impact on the

quality of education."

The Teacher Tapp survey comes as the Department for Education prepares to report for the first time on the specific reasons teachers leave the profession.

Until now, the government has looked only at the "destination" of departing teachers. But a new "reason for leaving" question was added to the school workforce census last year. The first data based on the new questions will be published in early June.

Schools will be able to record redundancy, either voluntary or compulsory, leaving for another teaching post, retirement or dismissal. But they will also be able to list "other" as a reason.

Jack Worth, from the National Foundation for Educational Research, said the destination measure "was always quite unreliable, so I don't know how reliable this new variable will be".

"It depends on how well schools fill it in, and they have no real incentive to make sure it's accurate."

Statistics from 2016 show the percentage of teachers aged between 50 and 60 had fallen from 21.7 per cent in 2010, to 15.6 per cent.

However, the number taking retirement throughout the 2015-16 financial year was lower than previous years.

Meanwhile, the number of teachers under 30 rose to nearly a quarter of the workforce, compared with 23 per cent in 2010.

**Question:** Do you feel that an upper pay scale teacher at your school has recently (in the last few years) been encouraged to leave or been made redundant to clear space for cheaper staff?

Yes, I'm confident they have



Yes, I feel they might have been



No, I do not believe this has happened recently



Cannot answer/not relevant



3,568 responses on April 18

Source: Teacher Tapp

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LISTINGS CORRECT AS AT 25.04.19 - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

# Private schools in talks to leave pension scheme

JESS STAUFENBERG  
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EXCLUSIVE



At least ten private schools are in talks with a school leaders' union about pulling out of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), with one major chain already set to move staff out.

The potential exodus could leave state schools facing further pension contribution hikes to fill a "black hole" in the scheme.

Employer contributions will rise from 16.4 per cent to 23.6 per cent in September, which the Department for Education said it would fund for state schools until the next spending review.

Independent schools say the increased contributions could force them to close or raise fees. The department is now considering allowing private schools to leave the TPS "via a phased withdrawal".

But Kate Atkinson, a pension expert at the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), said current contributions from private schools were helping to cover a predicted £1.7 billion black hole in the scheme.

"There is this huge assumed deficit, which in theory the Treasury thought it'd be getting more money for.

"The retired members now won't experience less money, but what it may mean down the line is the employer contributions from schools could rise to make up the shortfall."

Atkinson said at least ten private schools were talking to her union.

Private schools are not obliged to join the TPS, but they need government permission to do so. They are free to leave when they want, and must simply write to the education secretary. At that point all their teachers are withdrawn.

The department's proposed optional "phased withdrawal" allows a private school to retain its current teacher members, but to close the scheme to new entrants. The department will consult on the plan, should it get the backing of the sector.

Alpha Plus Group has already written to Damian Hinds over moving all its 20 private schools and colleges, some of which are already in a pension scheme with Scottish Widows, out of the TPS from September.

A spokesperson said the group did "not wish to pass on the increased costs of the mandated changes to the TPS to parents" – and wanted all staff in the same scheme.

The group would "maintain the current level of employer contributions" of 16.4 per cent for ten years, they added.

However, the private scheme is a defined contribution scheme rather than defined benefit scheme like the TPS, which Atkinson said was "riskier" as staff would not get a guaranteed amount on retirement.

She said a few schools were thinking about reducing their employer contributions from 16 per cent to as low as 5 per cent. "Some of these schools are not just using this as a cost-capping exercise, but as a cost-cutting exercise."

The NAHT wants all private schools leaving the TPS to join schemes that at least maintain the current 16 per cent contribution rate.

The Methodist Independent Schools Trust, which has 14 schools, said it was "reviewing the impact of the increase in employer contributions and following the national debate closely".

Atkinson said withdrawal from the TPS could also affect recruitment and retention. Experienced

teachers might choose to retire early because it would not be worth staying for a better pension, while less generous retirement packages could put graduates off teaching.

Teachers' ability to switch between the state and private sectors could also be jeopardised.

However, private schools could get a recruitment advantage if they used savings on pension contributions to boost salaries.

The Independent Schools Council (ISC), which represents about 1,000 private schools, said its schools would try to "ensure a balance between providing attractive remuneration packages for teachers" with "the need for schools to remain financially viable".

A Department for Education spokesperson said it would encourage independent schools to remain in the TPS so teachers could "continue to move between the public and private sector".

Schools Week understands two other education unions are in talks with private schools about moving out of the scheme.

## Pension consultation response: **need to know**

- DfE will "fully fund" contribution increases for state schools and colleges to tune of £830 million for 2019-20
- Private schools will not be funded, despite 28 per cent of respondents arguing for it
- But the DfE is considering a "phased withdrawal" in which current private school teachers remain in the scheme but it is closed to new entrants. It will consult on this soon
- Of the 360 private schools that responded, 185 indicated their school could leave the TPS and 57 said their school could close because of the proposals



# News

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## NGA questions heavy workload of trust chairs

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EXCLUSIVE

Chairs of trustees work the equivalent of a fifth of a full-time job running academy trusts, a new study has found.

A survey by the National Governance Association (NGA) found the average trust chair works 49.6 days a year – 21.4 per cent of what a full-time job would demand. It has questioned if the workload is sustainable.

Some chairs said they worked up to 24 hours a week.

The research, the first of its kind carried out in the academies sector, suggests that the average trust chair worked almost two-and-a-half times the 20 days a year recommended as a maximum for volunteer governors by the NGA.

More than 63 per cent said it was impossible to chair a multi-academy trust (MAT) and work full-time, while more than 66 per cent said the role impacted on the time they could spend with family or friends.

Lord Agnew, the academies minister, has



previously said that strong governance across the sector was one of his "top priorities".

But Emma Knights (pictured), the NGA's chief executive, said: "We're really trying to say: here is some quantitative evidence that absolutely shows you the commitment that people are making. We need to have an initial discussion about how sustainable this is."

Based on analysis of the hours worked and average earnings of chairs in their day jobs, the association estimated that they contributed between £7,344,720 and £9,792,640 to the sector in unpaid hours worked.

Almost three quarters of MAT board chairs

are also members of their trusts, spending on average 17 hours a year on that function alone, which the NGA says is "unlikely to be good practice".

Chairs who also govern at academy level take on extra work of about 100 hours a year.

Damian Hinds, the education secretary, recently backed calls for an increase in the number of ethnic minority governors, saying it was "vital that what [boards] say and do reflects their communities".

Of the respondents to the association's survey, all but one were white. Their mean age was 60.7, and two-thirds identified as male.

"It might be that we have this discussion and say it's fine to have mostly retired or semi-retired people in these roles, but we have to have that informed discussion," Knights said. "We don't want it swept under the carpet."

The research, based on a survey of 93 chairs, shows support for them to be paid for their time has increased slightly, but still remains low. About 15 per cent are given paid time off by their employers to work for their trusts.

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## Investigation

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# Council suing academy chain for £4m services bill

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@PIPPA\_AK

INVESTIGATES

A cash-strapped council is trying to sue an academy trust for more than £4 million over alleged unpaid services.

Lambeth council in south London has been in an escalating legal battle with the Parallel Learning Trust (PLT) for more than three years. The government has stepped in in an attempt to resolve the long spat.

According to PLT's accounts, the council has issued a claim of almost £3.38 million for unpaid payroll services, a pension contribution shortfall of £929,000, court fees of £10,000, and "other charges" for services totalling £28,779.

Two of PLT's seven schools are based in Lambeth. However, the trust's counterclaim argues that the council owes it £1.6 million in relation to "funding and unpaid invoices".

The trust's accounts say that a reduction in high-needs top-up funding had been "challenging", and criticised the council for declining "repeated attempts to renegotiate this".

The dispute has been described as a "symptom of a lack of funding across the sector", particularly in high needs, which council papers say is "not sustainable".

The Education and Skills Agency is acting as an arbitrator in a dispute that has resulted in PLT repaying £28,333 a month since February last year.

A spokesperson for Lambeth said the "significant payroll debt" was accrued after the trust formed in 2014. Both parties were working with the ESFA to come to "a reasonable repayment agreement".

A spokesperson for PLT said its payroll debt was an "historic issue" that arose under the "previous regime", and insisted relationships between the council and trust were "stronger than ever".

Accounts for 2016-17 show its chief executive, human resources manager and financial accountant were dismissed for "attempted falsification of salary-related documentation".

The accounts said "there was no financial loss to the trust as a consequence of this impropriety".

The spokesperson added: "We can confirm



that we anticipate concluding a settlement agreement shortly.

"At all times Lambeth and PLT have worked closely with the ESFA to manage the issue. The ESFA is aware of the matter and has approved PLT's financial plan to move the trust forward."

Accounts for 2016 show the trust received a legal demand from the council for an immediate payment of £843,000, out of a total debt of £2.17 million.

At the time PLT argued that Lambeth owed it £1.58 million. The dispute also seems to touch on a wider national issue over squeezed high-needs funding.

The trust's accounts show the council's "top up" funding (the money provided above core funding for pupils with high needs) decreased from £9,959 a pupil in 2014-15, to £8,506 last year.

Papers from a meeting of the Lambeth Schools Forum in October last year said spending in the high-needs block was "not sustainable".

The forum agreed to transfer 0.5 per cent of the schools block funding into the high-needs block for 2018-19, and asked the same transfer to be made in 2019-20 as cost



Parallel Learning Trust

pressures were "continuing and increasing".

Julia Harnden, a funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, warned of a "crisis in funding in high needs and across the sector more broadly".

"The vast majority of providers are doing an excellent job for pupils that aren't able to access mainstream education, but the funding crisis is hitting all parts of the sector. The pressure on funding for alternative provision is a symptom of the lack of funding across the system."

A report from the Local Government Association, published in December, warned that the pressures on high-needs funding have "forced the system to a tipping point", and warned that most local authorities "are in deficit on their high-needs block, believe high-needs spending pressures will continue to rise, and have little confidence in their ability to balance budgets".

A spokesperson for the ESFA said it was working with both parties and it "would not be appropriate to comment on ongoing legal proceedings."



# News: academies

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## MAT to publish its own value-added scores

JESS STAUFENBERG  
@STAUFENBERGJ

A major academy trust has vowed to publish its own value-added scores for parents as it says the "fundamentally flawed" Progress 8 performance measure punishes schools with challenging cohorts.

The Co-op Academies Trust, which runs 20 schools in deprived areas of the northwest, said the performance measure favoured schools with more middle-class intakes.

Frank Norris, the trust's chief executive, plans to ask researchers at the University of Bristol, who developed a value-added progress measure in January, to analyse his schools' performance – and publish this alongside the government's official score each year.

But Education Datalab, which has investigated value-added progress measures, warned that differences between the "vast majority of schools are tiny once differences in prior attainment and context are accounted for. So any 'rankings' would then largely be based on statistical noise."

However Norris said the "blunt" Progress 8 measure was responsible for good school leaders losing their jobs. He called on heads to follow his lead so "parents get a true picture of a school's academic performance".

The trust's average progress score is -0.08, just below the national average, according to latest data. At primary level, 72 per cent of pupils in the trust were disadvantaged compared with a national average of 31 per cent; at secondary 56 per cent, compared with a national average of 27 per cent.

Star Academies posted a progress score of 1.42 last year – the highest in the country – but just 26.7 per cent of its secondary pupils are disadvantaged.

James Eldon, the principal of the Manchester Enterprise Academy, told the BBC last year that Progress 8 was skewed against schools in deprived white communities. "If this was any other ethnic group at the bottom, people would be unsettled."

A DfE spokesperson said it wanted "all pupils, whatever their background, to be able to fulfil their potential ... That's why we introduced Progress 8 as a fairer way to assess overall school effectiveness, because it holds schools accountable for the performance of all of their pupils; not just those close to the C/D borderline."

## New post for former head of trust facing budget black hole



Tom Quinn

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS  
@PIPPA\_AK

A trust chief executive who left his post earlier this month amid an internal investigation over a budget black hole has been appointed head of another trust.

Tom Quinn, the chief executive at Holy Family Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, left alongside the trust's operations director Sally Mitchell.

John Williams, the chair of governors at the St John Plessington Catholic College on the Wirral – where Quinn was executive headteacher – also resigned.

*Schools Week* understands that an internal investigation is ongoing surrounding hundreds of thousands of pounds missing from Holy Family's budget. The trust would not comment on this allegation.

However, it was announced yesterday that Quinn is now chief executive at the Frank Field Education Trust, where he has been working part-time as interim chief executive.

Frank Field, the veteran Labour MP, told *Schools Week* that he was "overjoyed" that Quinn would now be in the role full time, describing him as "one of the best headmasters in the country".

When questioned about the ongoing investigation at Holy Family, Field said: "As things unfold, we must try and understand why people have tried to bring down one of our great headmasters. The most important thing for me is to bind myself with Tom. I have never doubted his qualities, his brilliance in teaching, his honesty."

"At stages in the future, people will have to account for their actions. I'm willing to answer for mine."

A spokesperson for the Diocese of Shrewsbury, which founded the Wirral-based

Holy Family trust, said Quinn's departure was agreed by mutual consent on April 18 with the agreement of the Association of School and College Leaders, which he said also approved the contents of a letter sent to parents and a press notice issued by the diocese.

The spokesperson said the final legal agreements were due to be signed on April 25. However, rather than sign the agreements, Quinn said he "wished to resign with immediate effect", the diocese said.

"We wish Mr Quinn every success in his new position with the Frank Field trust," the spokesperson added.

According to the Frank Field trust website, Quinn previously served as a co-opted member of the headteacher board for Lancashire and West Yorkshire region.

He is also a member of the secondary headteacher reference group, a group of "leading headteachers" that advise and influence the Department for Education's policy development.

A spokesperson for the department said Quinn remained a member of that group, but there would be a discussion as to whether he continued in the role now that he had taken up his new post.

The diocese spokesman said Quinn, Mitchell and Williams had given "many years of service to the school and the diocese would like to take this opportunity to wish them well for the future".

"Pupils, parents and staff can be assured that the stability and success of St John Plessington Catholic College is uppermost in the minds of trustee directors, governors and the diocese and all involved with the oversight of the school. The arrangements which are being put into place will ensure this."

A new chief finance officer, Ian Potts, would oversee financial management of all schools in the trust.



## News: funding

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# DfE plans to let you in on cost-cutting secrets

FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

Ministers will publish a breakdown of recommendations made by its team of cost-cutting advisers later this year.

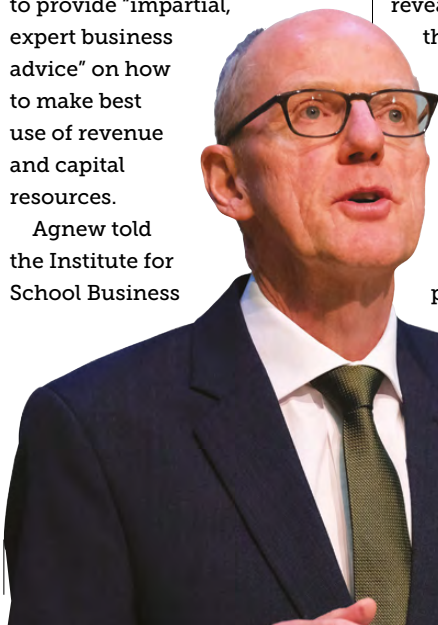
The Department for Education had refused to release documents showing a breakdown of the £35 million of savings that Lord Agnew, the academies minister, claimed his school resource management advisers had helped schools to identify.

In response to our freedom of information request last December, the DfE said officials were doing "further analysis" of the savings and would then consider releasing the information.

However, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, confirmed this week that his department planned to publish a breakdown of the "opportunities" that the advisers identified. However, it will be part of a "wider published evaluation of the pilot programme later this year".

The government launched the scheme last year with a budget of £2.3 million to employ up to 250 advisers to provide "impartial, expert business advice" on how to make best use of revenue and capital resources.

Agnew told the Institute for School Business



Nick Gibb



Leadership conference in November that the advisers had identified average savings of nearly £500,000 across the 72 schools or trusts that took part in the pilot last year.

The DfE would not release details, saying that the advisers' reports contained commercially sensitive information. The department said it had been "clear" findings would only be shared between the trust/school and the government.

However, *Schools Week* obtained some of the reports, revealing earlier this month that school leaders had been urged to limit pupils' lunch portions, keep money raised for charity and replace senior staff with less well-qualified teachers on poorer contracts.

The investigation prompted widespread condemnation across education, with Theresa May challenged over the

findings during Prime Minister's Questions.

Gibb also refused to say

whether he backed the advice when questioned during a parliamentary education committee, instead claiming the *Schools Week* investigation took the recommendations "out of context".

Agnew, who once bet school leaders a bottle of champagne that he could find savings in their schools, said the advisers were "part of a package of support to help schools get the best value out of their budgets".

Writing for *Schools Week*, he said: "Their work is not something that should be viewed in isolation, taken out of context, or, as *Schools Week* chose to do, framed as a cost-cutting initiative with the aim of improving trusts' bottom lines."

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# News



EXCLUSIVE

## DfE didn't look into failed UTC's finances

FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

The government chose not to investigate when auditors were unable to properly scrutinise the finances of a failed university technical college.

Accounts for the Greater Manchester UTC for 2016-17, published last month after missing the deadline by more than a year, reveal auditors gave a rare "disclaimer of opinion" on the state of the UTC's finances because important data was missing.

They could not find out income and expenditure or see the school's balance sheet or a statement of cash flow.

The UTC, set up by Michael Dwan, the venture capitalist and Bright Tribe founder, closed in September 2017 after failing to attract enough pupils to be financially sustainable.

In the accounts, the auditors said they were "unable to obtain all of the information and explanations requested" following the departure of trustees and leaders during 2016-17.

The documents also show the UTC closed after three years with a £526,000 deficit, which the government paid off.

A disclaimer of opinion is one of four types of report issued by external auditors when looking at company accounts and means that a company's financial status cannot be determined. Such reports are rare in the academies sector; just three were issued in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

However, despite the rarity and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) previously investigating trusts and schools on the basis of internal financial information or concerns about financial irregularities, the Department for Education told *Schools Week* no investigation was carried out in this case.

Lucy Powell, the MP for Greater Manchester and a member of the parliamentary education committee, told *Schools Week*: "The failure to supply adequate accounting information to the

auditors is really concerning, and is a further indictment on the management and oversight of this school.

"It beggars belief that the DfE has failed to undertake an investigation into this situation. Large sums of public money were at stake and the DfE and ESFA need much better systems to account for its expenditure."

She added that a "catalogue of errors from the DfE, the ESFA and the school leadership" had contributed to the UTC's downfall.

*Schools Week* understands the ESFA must consider the cost of any investigation and might have chosen not to do in this case because the UTC was due to close.

Greater Manchester UTC opened in September 2014, but was struggling less than two years later.

A flurry of directors resigned in 2016. Michael Dwan and his brother Andrew left in November, but North Consulting Limited, a company owned by Michael Dwan, remained as the UTC's company secretary until January 20, 2017.

Michael Dwan also remained as a controlling member of the trust until that date, with the Bright Tribe Trust and University of Bolton.

A spokesperson for Dwan said he had resigned in July 2016, but continued to offer "some support to facilitate the transition", which was given "at the request of the Department for Education".

"He did not at any stage have any day-to-day operational responsibilities and was never made aware of any issues with the accounts or a lack of information.

"He was never approached asking for any documentation."

A DfE spokesperson insisted the accounts "were signed off by the trust and the auditors", but acknowledged the disclaimer of opinion.

"New trustees were appointed in February 2017 to oversee the closure of Greater Manchester Sustainable Engineering UTC. The parent trust is still in place, pending all actions being completed."

## Heads, don't be put off advertising for science specialists

FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

Advertising for general science teachers is no more effective than seeking those with subject-specific qualifications, according to new research.

Analysis by SchoolDash found specialist posts were less likely to be readvertised than general positions, contradicting a "common assumption that specialist positions are harder to fill".

The results suggest that schools of any kind "should not avoid trying to recruit specialist science teachers simply out of fear of not being able to fill the position", according to the report produced on behalf of the Gatsby Foundation.

"On the contrary, it may even make the task easier," Timo Hannay, the founder of SchoolDash, wrote. "This is not as counterintuitive as it may seem: science teachers might be more, not less, attracted to roles that are specific to their own area of expertise."

However, the research also found that schools in deprived areas or in certain locations such as Yorkshire and the Humber, were among those that were "disproportionately less likely to advertise for science teachers with qualifications in physics, chemistry or biology".

Science teachers are sought after by many schools, but a Department for Education analysis of teacher supply, recruitment and retention published in 2017 found they are also most likely to leave the profession.

The government offers would-be physics and chemistry teachers bursaries of up to £26,000 to entice them to join the profession.

Charles Tracey, head of education at Institute of Physics, warned that many headteachers "are deterred" from advertising for subject-specific teachers.

They should "take heart from the evidence and hold out for the sort of disciplinary expertise that will be of great benefit to their students' outcomes and opportunities".



# Trust DID 'flatten the grass', emails reveal

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA\_AK

EXCLUSIVE

Emails seen by *Schools Week* reveal senior leaders at an academy trust arranged and encouraged support for a controversial approach to behaviour management – although it denied it had any such policy.

Delta Academies Trust insisted it did not have a “flattening the grass” behaviour policy, an approach that caused widespread concern earlier this year after reports of assemblies in which children were humiliated and screamed at. Some were excluded.

However, internal emails show senior leaders preparing for “flattening the grass” assemblies in June 2018, and calling on “strong” colleagues to “support” the process.

Allegations about the assemblies surfaced in February, with complaints centred on Delta and Outwood Grange Academy Trust (OGAT). Delta has been run by Paul Tarn, the former deputy chief executive at OGAT, since March 2016.

Delta employees told *Schools Week* that in these assemblies staff were told to “get in” pupils’ faces, to “make examples” of them and to “scream” and “bawl” at them until they cried. They said they were warned if they were “not shouting loud enough”.

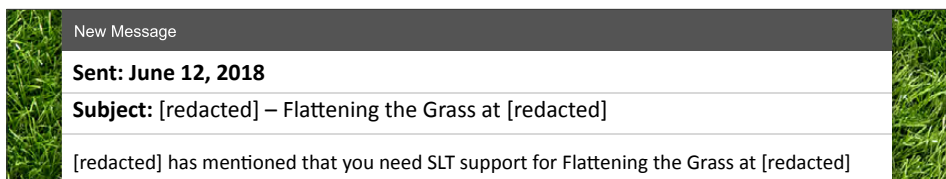
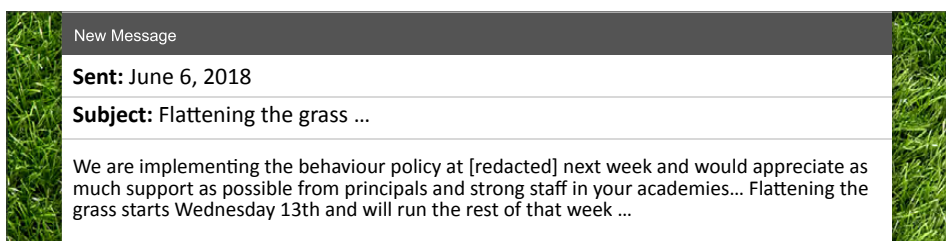
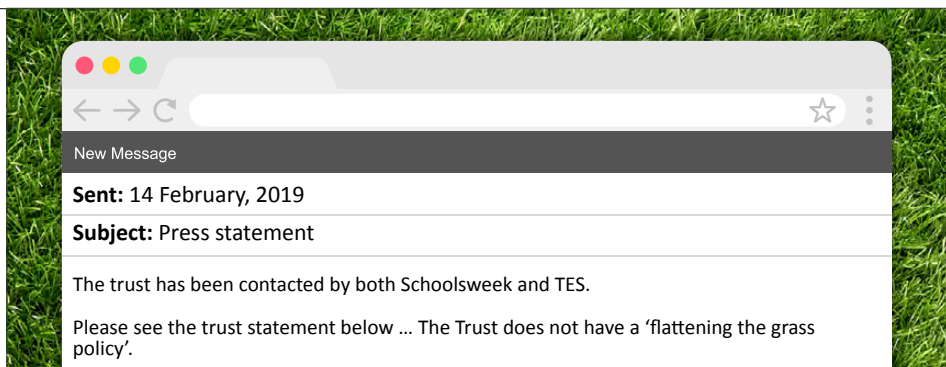
An internal email between Delta staff, sent in February, highlighted a trust statement released to journalists that said it “does not have a ‘flattening the grass’ policy”. Although this line did not appear in the comment given to this newspaper, it was published by the *Times Educational Supplement*.

However, 14 emails containing the phrase “flattening the grass” in the subject heading were sent to or from senior leaders at the trust in June last year.

On June 6, one said the trust was “implementing the behaviour policy” at one academy the following week and “would appreciate as much support as possible from principals and strong staff in your academies”.

Other emails asked schools to send “year leaders/SLT and key staff over to support” the assemblies and said “directors can come help out”. Delta said the title “director” was given to its senior subject specialist teachers.

A spokesperson for Delta, which runs



academies in some of the most deprived areas of the north of England, said: “The emails use the phrase ‘flattening the grass’ to describe the initial work when a school joins us. They do not show that there is or was a ‘flattening the grass’ policy.”

“We do not have a policy. The common factor is that we reassure students and staff that, from now on, they will be supported, they will be safe, and they can teach and learn.”

He added that any “initial work” undertaken when a new school joined the trust “will be tailored to its specific issues”.

Emma Hardy, a Labour MP and member of the education select committee, told *Schools Week*: “If Delta believe its ‘flattening the grass’ behaviour policy – or its behaviour policy which it refers to within the school as ‘flattening the grass’ – is so great as to have turned around the results in its academies, then why isn’t it standing up and using it as an example for all other academy trusts?”

“Why isn’t it saying ‘to improve schools this is what you need to do?’ if it truly believes this is the right way forward?”

At their annual conference last week members of the National Education Union voted in favour of allowing council oversight of



Paul Tarn

behaviour policies in all schools, following the rise of “draconian” and “inhumane” behaviour approaches.

But a Delta spokesperson said its approach meant that “behaviour and grades improve; wellbeing, confidence, self-belief and aspiration rise significantly; and children achieve”.

OGAT has previously said it “did not recognise” the allegations that its staff had shouted and screamed at pupils, adding that in “inspection after inspection Ofsted is lavishing praise on our schools for their happy atmosphere and outstanding academic progress”.



## Round-up: NEU conference

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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# Corbyn's SATs pledge gets mixed reaction

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Debate over the future of primary testing dominated this year's National Education Union (NEU) conference in Liverpool as Jeremy Corbyn (pictured) pledged to scrap SATs and delegates voted to ballot members for a boycott of all tests next year.

The Opposition leader told the annual conference that his party would end the "regime of extreme pressure testing" if it won power – including SATs and the new reception baseline test – and would introduce a "more flexible and practical" primary assessment.

Details, however, are scarce and the party won't say more until after a consultation this summer.

Corbyn's announcement followed a heated debate during which delegates voted in favour of a ballot on boycotting all primary tests in 2019-20.

Teaching and leadership unions have



long warned that the current system puts too much strain on pupils and staff.

Labour's plan – unsurprisingly backed by the NEU and the National Association of Head Teachers and Association of School and College Leaders – promises a system that it claimed would "trust and empower teachers to deliver a broader curriculum, not a rigid assessment regime".

"We need to prepare children for life, not just for exams," Corbyn said.

"SATs and the regime of extreme pressure testing are giving young children nightmares and leaving them in floods of tears."

But Nick Gibb, the schools minister, accused the party of planning to "keep parents in the dark".

"These tests have been part of school life since the Nineties. They have been pivotal in raising standards in our primary schools. That's why Labour governments led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown supported them."

The NEU also passed a motion opposing "any reprisals" against pupils who walked out of school to campaign against climate change, and another instructing its leadership to lobby the government to make LGBT+ relationship education compulsory.

Delegates also voted for union leaders to campaign for local authorities to have oversight of and involvement in the development of behaviour policies "for all the academies/schools in their districts". The vote followed warnings that the rise of "draconian" and "inhumane" behaviour approaches was damaging the mental health and education of pupils.

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## Stories you may have missed over the Easter holidays

Don't worry if you switched off during the holidays. We've rounded-up all the key stories you may have missed. Just click the link at the end of each story to read the full report on our website



### 50k pupils 'pushed around school system' in 'unexplained' moves

A major study by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) shed new light on the scale of potential off-rolling (where schools are illegally removed from a school's roll).

The study found 50,000 (1 in 12) pupils due to finish secondary school in 2017 were removed from rolls for "unexplained" reasons (those other than a permanent exclusion or a family move).

Jo Hutchinson, director for social mobility and vulnerable learners at EPI, said: "Children are being pushed around the school system in England on an industrial scale."

FOR MORE INFO CLICK HERE +



### Parent power forces church MAT to halt restructuring

The Church of England has long raised concerns over keeping open its many small, rural schools amid the funding squeeze. One route is to make efficiencies to balance budgets.

But the consequences of this were exposed last week when the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust paused plans to make a headteacher redundant following protests by parents.

The Bishop of Leicester had also urged trustees to ensure they were "serving both church and community".

FOR MORE INFO CLICK HERE +



### More pupils miss out on preferred primaries

The government was quick to congratulate itself on primary school national offer day last week. Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said it was more likely that children would be attending a good school.

However, a dive into the statistics found that in areas facing the biggest squeeze on places fewer youngsters were offered a place at any of their preferred schools.

FOR MORE INFO CLICK HERE +



### MAT teachers face going unpaid over summer holidays

Up to five academy trusts are at loggerheads with unions over plans to shake up teachers' pay and conditions.

The proposals include changing notice periods to make it quicker to dismiss "underperforming" staff. However, unions fear this could result in staff going unpaid during summer holidays.

FOR MORE INFO CLICK HERE +

### Councils pay to put children in illegal schools, Ofsted claims

The education watchdog published a breakdown of the illegal schools it has investigated, as part of its wider push to gain more inspection powers over unregulated settings.

One council was found to be paying an illegal alternative provision school an annual £27,000 to educate a pupil. Meanwhile, just over a fifth of the schools were religious, despite much of the narrative around illegal settings focusing on faith settings, such as Muslim madrasas and Jewish yeshivas.



FOR MORE INFO CLICK HERE +



### Treasury claws back £300m in unspent DfE cash

Our exclusive that the Treasury recouped more than £300 million of unspent apprenticeship levy funds from the department's education budget did not go down well with cash-strapped schools.

Some of this cash could also have been paid into the levy pot from schools.

FOR MORE INFO CLICK HERE +

# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Ministers risk creating a lost generation of capable and committed teachers

One of the most shocking findings from our investigation into Lord Agnew's cost-cutting advisers last month was the revelation that a trust was told to replace experienced teachers with those newly qualified to save money.

So while the latest polling data from Teacher Tapp – which shows that 1 in 10 teachers is aware of similar practices at their schools – is unsurprising, it is nonetheless a matter of grave concern to a sector that can ill-afford to lose some of its most valued workers.

We should all feel ashamed about the testimony from Susan Cavanagh, who left the profession she had dedicated 15 years of her life to because she felt that “the older you seem to get in teaching, the less they value your experience”.

While the government's additional data collection on the reasons for teachers leaving the profession is welcome, as are the measures in its recruitment and retention strategy,

ministers must now go further and guarantee the funding that schools need so they can stop cutting corners in this way.

For schools, the act of hiring newly-qualified teachers and junior support staff should be a wonderful opportunity to help shape the education professionals of the future, not just the chance to save a fast buck.

And although systematic underfunding of our system leaves many headteachers with no choice but to consider restructures, we must condemn those who choose to bully older teachers out of the profession.

If ministers do not act soon, they risk creating a lost generation of capable, committed and hard-working education professionals, whose enthusiasm for their great profession is being snuffed out ahead of its time.

We must not allow our most experienced teachers be chewed up and spat out by our system in the name of austerity.



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## Profile

CATH MURRAY | @CATHMURRAY\_



**“Michael Gove made me what I am today”**

### Emma Hardy, MP for Hull West and Hessle

Emma Hardy may be a relative newbie in Parliament, but she's a bit of a trendsetter. Last May she launched the all-party parliamentary group on oracy. By January Nick Gibb, the schools minister, was announcing that educational traditionalists should claim oracy for themselves.

“He's going to be copying everything I say now. What can I say? We agree on so much,” the Labour MP says with a laugh over a salad served on a disposable plate.

We're in the one cafe in Portcullis House that's

open over the Easter recess. The restaurant in the main atrium is closed for routine maintenance and Bellamy's lunch buffet is doing a roaring trade, although its broken dishwasher is causing a few problems.

No one is supposed to be here. Hardy would usually be in her home constituency with her two young daughters, Olivia and Isabel, but instead she and hundreds of others are stuck in Brexit limbo – milling around Parliament like teachers on results day, exuding a mix of uncertainty, anticipation and holiday fever.

If I imagined Hardy's mind would be wandering off towards the prime minister's negotiations

in Berlin, however, I couldn't be more wrong. The former primary teacher wants to talk about “anything other than Brexit”.

So could oracy be one of the few education topics that manages to unite politicians cross-party and educationists across the prog-trad divide?

“I do think it's hopeful that [Gibb] sees it,” she says, “but I worry that he's saying it's important because he wants to teach everyone the rules of debating, rather than help people to find their voices.”

For Hardy – who worked for the National Union of Teachers for two years – oracy is



## Profile: Emma Hardy



Hardy (in black with arms clasped) with members of the APPG oracy group

about more than the “purposeful, constructive discussion that enhances understanding” that Gibb referred to in a speech to the conference run by the traditionalist campaign group Parents and Teachers for Excellence. Rather, it’s about enabling children, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, to express themselves.

“We know the frustration when you don’t feel you’re being listened to, you don’t feel people understand you, so why are we not prioritising this?” To underline her point, she cites the figure from the Prison Reform Trust that 60 per cent of people in jail have communication difficulties.

**“We should talk more about teaching tolerance, teaching mutual respect”**

“While Nick Gibb’s banging on about 95 per cent of children getting the EBacc, maybe he’s

got his priorities a bit wrong. You can’t get 95 per cent of a population to fit into one model, that just isn’t going to happen. Maybe we should be talking a little bit more about teaching tolerance, teaching mutual respect.

“What if we as a society just got people to talk about what kind of citizens we want to create from our school system – and work our way back from that. Would we design the system we have now?”

One thing she would like every school pupil to learn, is “how to disagree without being disagreeable”.

It was Michael Gove, the former education secretary, who made Hardy what she is today, she told the online TV channel Core Politics when she took up her seat. “He was the fuel behind me. He created me. I was a primary teacher, I didn’t like what he’d done in education, and I slowly worked my way up to where I could be in a position to tell him that face to face.”

Her maiden speech to the Commons in July 2017 linked “high-stakes accountability” and the education assessment system to worsening mental health in schools. It’s still high on her priority list, although she’s clearer about what she doesn’t want, rather than what she does.

“If you say to a school, ‘The only thing I’m going to judge you on is what results your children get



At an education select committee meeting



## Profile: Emma Hardy



At the 2015 Northern Rocks conference

at the end', then don't be surprised when you see off-rolling and increased exclusions," she says.

But she wouldn't scrap regulation altogether. "Obviously there has to be some accountability and obviously I wouldn't ever advocate for a system when people go, 'Just trust teachers!'"

Although unconvinced that Ofsted is accurately able to judge the quality of a school, she won't be pinned down on what kind of regulation should be in place, save to mention an "area-based accountability system" – a phrase also used by Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union.

What she'd definitely like to see is a revival of local authority school improvement services, acting as the "critical friend" to whom school leaders can honestly say what they are struggling with, and receive support.

But should politicians not be wary of introducing more changes?

"You say they want everything to stay as it is, but that only really works if you said, 'And we have record numbers of retention and people are loving the profession and morale has never been so high.' The fact is morale is really low and teachers are leaving, so I think there is an appetite for change."

While Hardy's views run counter to government policy on many education topics, the education select committee, chaired by Tory Robert Halfon, is one place where there seems to be little disagreement.

### "Morale is low. There is an appetite for change"

"Completely!" Hardy agrees. "I mean, we've solved Brexit on that. We've got Lucy Powell and Robert Halfon, who didn't really know each other before, as two of the main architects behind Brexit 2.0. Because they've developed such a strong bond from working on the select committee together."

Some Labour committee members affectionately gave William Wragg, a Conservative MP, the moniker "comrade Will" after he finally advocated for more funding for schools, Hardy says. "He was like, 'I don't think so.'"

On most education topics, she speaks convincingly, with common sense. On exclusions, she understands what it's like to have a disruptive child in class, but is keen to talk about how schools need additional funding and trained counsellors to intervene earlier.

She wants to drop the "obsession" with grading schools, and instead focus on developing teachers. "We should talk instead about what makes a difference: all the wrap-around care and

support for families and social services work in schools – all those things that we know work. Early intervention. How in each school can they encourage each teacher to be the best they can."

So does she want to be involved in giving shape to Labour's nebulous National Education Service? What are her career ambitions?

"Blimey. Survive, I think!"

"It sounds lame, but I have young children. I look at how much time Angela Rayner [the shadow education secretary] puts in – weekends away, every Friday doing work, having to be available because she's on the front bench. I mean it is a huge, huge, commitment, whereas I'm very happy on the select committee, and, as a new MP, I've got all my constituency responsibilities.

"Also I couldn't go home on a Thursday if I was on the front bench. I need to focus on my constituency and doing education while I've got my family. That's enough."

Can this harbinger of the schools minister's passions tell me what he might be waxing lyrical about next?

"Poetry!" exclaims Hardy. Hot from the success of the oracy APPG, Hardy has agreed to chair another one. Classic poetry, spoken word, performance poetry – the whole gamut. "I thought it was a lovely idea, poets come and read poems," she says, with obvious delight. A welcome distraction from the Brexit debacle, one would imagine.

# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**Successful ITE curricula are co-designed and co-taught across a partnership, says Jan Rowe**

Ofsted's recent attempt to confirm what some in its research division think is wrong with teacher education raises the important issue of curriculum in initial teacher education (ITE).

But just as with the curriculum in schools, the risk is that a curriculum for ITE – under the threat of inspection – is reduced to a list of favoured theories “delivered” to trainee teachers in lecture halls. Consequently, the curriculum that is enacted during the two thirds of the time that they spend working and learning in schools is devalued or, worse still, ignored.

An exclusive emphasis on the university or “centre-based” contribution (where the powerful knowledge is mediated through lectures, workshops, tutorials, etc) overlooks that successful ITE curricula are co-designed and co-taught across a partnership – and are rooted in that partnership's shared pedagogical approach and an agreed division of labour and expert knowledge between school and centre-based teacher educators.

Indeed, ITE inspection reports consistently emphasise that to develop “high-quality” beginning teachers, it is a “high-quality” partnership that really matters. And given the amount of time trainees spend in schools, it tends to be the powerful knowledge in the school-based teacher education curriculum that has the greatest impact.

Expert curriculum design in ITE recognises that teacher learning takes varied, but equally valuable,



JAN ROWE

Head of initial teacher education,  
Liverpool John Moores University

## New teachers have to know more than a list of favoured theories

forms across multiple sites; is largely work-based (especially for the PGCE); and has to be planned holistically and in increasingly responsive ways. It isn't just a matter of what theories one partner (the university or centre) wishes to promote.;

each of the following elements in the programme offer this year?”

Such a question also suggests that Ofsted researchers not only misunderstand the concept of curriculum in general, but the nature of an ITE curriculum in particular. The assumption is that

“Ofsted's researchers seem to have a fundamental lack of understanding of partnership models

Research has consistently shown that without genuinely strong collaboration the daily, messy entanglements of classrooms tend to “wash out” in trainees' practice any prior theoretical intentions derived from research and evidence.

The questionnaires Ofsted's research division recently distributed to ITE providers seem to demonstrate a fundamental lack of understanding of these partnership models. For example, providers were asked, in relation to a rather partial list of possible “elements” of curriculum content: “How many hours have you allocated to delivering

the quality of that curriculum can be totted up in hours allotted to a range of discrete topics regardless of subject, phase, school, cohort or individual trainee priorities.

To take the example of classroom/behaviour management, trainees might only experience eight hours of direct instruction that is centre-based (contextualising the issues, introducing both key research-based principles and a basic toolkit). However, to regard these hours as encapsulating the entirety of the planned and enacted ITE curriculum in classroom/behaviour management would be misleading.

What also needs to be included are, for example, school-based coaching specific to trainee, class and subject being taught; collaborative planning and teaching; cycles of observation and feedback; small group rehearsal and deliberate practice of key strategies; systematic investigation and data collection for both continuous learning and summative assessment purposes. All these experiences and more characterise the distributed, multi-faceted nature of an ITE curriculum.

Harry Judge, who died recently at the age of 90, led the early developments of the pioneering Oxford University ITE programme that went on to become a national model for PGCE courses. Harry and his colleagues understood that to have any chance of success, an ITE curriculum had to be co-constructed by the key partners (the placement school as well as the partnership more widely, usually in collaboration with a university) in the course of extended communication with the trainees. It had to be stretched across schools and the university and had to be work-related.

To paraphrase the curriculum expert Douglas Barnes, an ITE curriculum made up only of totted-up hours of theoretical intentions would be an insubstantial thing. We forget these lessons about curriculum and about ITE at our peril.

Co-written by Viv Ellis, professor of educational leadership and teacher development, King's College London

# Opinion

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



LAURA  
LARKE

Researcher, Oxford Internet  
Institute, University of Oxford

## Who needs coding when it's pupil safety that matters?

**Schools would be better using their limited edtech resources to help pupils to stay safe and develop as informed citizens, argues Laura Larke**

As I listened to Damian Hinds announcing the Department for Education's new educational technology strategy, the question that rattled around in my head was simply "Is this really what we should be spending time and money on?"

As he outlined his plans to support the edtech sector in creating better products and to guide schools in making better purchasing decisions, I couldn't help but feel a sense of déjà vu – a feeling that is all too common when it comes to England's educational policy-making.

Is the mispurchasing of edtech really what's been plaguing England's schools as they struggle to produce the next generation of tech users and inventors? Sure, the jury is still out on its role in improving education historically, and the quality and claims about many of the products currently on the market are dubious at best. But with the government cutting funding on education, is improving edtech where the DfE's efforts should be focused?

The public – and children in particular – face a variety of

significant risks when using networked digital technologies, such as the internet. This was demonstrated most recently in the Online Harms white paper, produced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. Technical and regulatory solutions have so far

“ Education is the next line of defence to protect young people

failed to significantly reduce these potential harms, as shown by recent scandals involving foreign election interference, serious data breaches, and self-harm images on social media.

Education is the natural next line of defence in our national strategy to protect young people from online harms. However, the DfE's continued narrow focus on the use of technology in schools for administrative tasks and the teaching of computer science principles (namely coding) above other digital skills does nothing to advance the role of education in protecting young people's wellbeing.

But what does the evidence show that young people actually need to learn? Digital issues such as misinformation, propaganda, cyberbullying, and grooming



are technologically facilitated, but ultimately social problems. Therefore, students need to develop their media literacy (identifying author intentions and assessing credibility) and information literacy (the ability to think critically and make balanced judgments), in

addition to their digital literacy.

Research has shown the importance of media and information literacy education, as well as the challenges faced in improving it nationwide. However, with this trifecta of modern literacies, England's young people should be better prepared to face a poorly regulated, increasingly digitalised world.

With schools struggling with severe budget cuts – and insufficient funding for teacher training in those skills that might help students defend against digital dangers – many students are not receiving the modern education that they need to stay safe and develop as informed citizens. With the DfE's new edtech strategy being informed by an instrumentalist approach to technology and with

a disappointingly small pot of funding available for its implementation – none of it guaranteed to reach schools' emptying coffers – there isn't much hope that this will be the programme that improves modern literacy education in England's schools.

In an ideal world, schools would receive the funding necessary to use technology to improve learning, reduce teachers' workload and make administrative processes more efficient, while also providing the training and physical resources needed to teach media, information, and digital literacy in a rigorous and comprehensive way.

However, if austerity continues, then we must focus our limited time and treasure on the most time-critical of these issues. The DfE must provide teachers with the leadership and resources necessary to protect students' safety today and our country's democracy tomorrow, through improvements in information, media, and digital literacy education. The new edtech strategy – and the computing curriculum that came before it – are ill-suited to accomplish either of these goals.



# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



### Education: A Manifesto for Change

By Richard Gerver

Published by Bloomsbury

Reviewed by Sarah Bedwell, classroom teacher

I'm always wary of texts with the word "manifesto" in their title, and in this case that wariness was warranted. What the author describes as, "... a heads-up, big-picture piece, one that [he] urge[s] you to use to debate, discuss and develop new visions and values..." is actually little more than a rehashing of age-old thinking in education, most of which I remember hearing about as a student in the early 2000s.

The book did not begin well: a foreword by Ross Morrison McGill, known as "the most followed teacher on Twitter", is quickly followed by several chapters urging caution on teachers using social media lest they listen to and enact advice from the "wrong" sort of educationist. At the same time it ignores that this technology has given teachers more of a voice than they've ever had, not to mention a global staffroom and network of colleagues who provide support and help to drive change.

If you can get past the persistent name-dropping, a veritable global who's who of entrepreneurs, sporting heroes and even a former US president, you're not left with a great deal of actual meat on the manifesto's bones. Chapter by chapter we are urged to get along with each other, create learning environments that encourage learners to take risks, and to teach soft skills to prepare our students for an ever-changing world. I would find it difficult to either find a teacher who doesn't at least partially agree with these ideas, or who hasn't heard it all before.

Each chapter seemed to be a repeat

of something already laboriously described earlier in the book, with little new information. For example, chapter 1 provides not one, but two lists of key findings from research done by Google, which are seemingly obvious traits of effective managers. Chapter 3 then goes on to list similar characteristics of great teachers, before chapter 5 rehashes the idea for a third time. There are really

### "This is little more than a rehashing of age-old thinking"

only so many ways to provide variations on planning, supporting learners, being goal-orientated and listening to students, and this "manifesto" repeats them as many times as possible.

Having forced myself through the foreword, introduction and chapter 1, I was met with this in chapter 2: "As qualified and committed educators, I believe that it is our responsibility to directly and indirectly support the learning of all children, everywhere." Well, quite. If this is

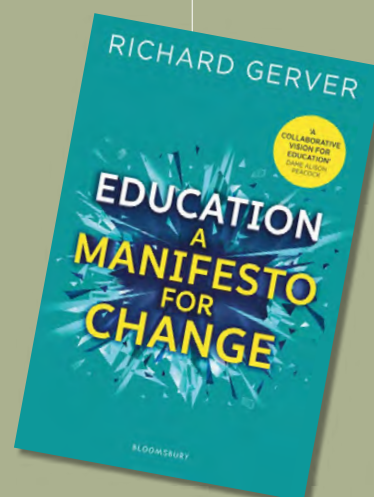
supposed to be a manifesto directed at "all those involved in education", that seems a little too much like teaching your grandmother to suck eggs, and hardly part of a manifesto for change.

If you are able to persevere to the end, you'll be left scratching your head over what this manifesto supposedly is. The author's introduction suggests that it will be built around helping the next generation to be healthy, skilled, aware, hopeful and of value, but a hundred pages later I still wasn't clear on exactly how he perceives teachers or those involved in education to achieve this (or indeed if we have not already got a system that fosters this).

It reads more as an overly long and self-indulgent blog than any kind of declaration of aims and actions.

For me, this book is less of a manifesto and more wisps of smoke from the barbecue that a neighbour three doors down is having: you can smell it, you know it's there somewhere, but it's elusive, unobtainable and disappears before

you've identified any of the specific details that you thought might have otherwise been obvious. It's no more concrete nor believable than a political manifesto at election time.



# Research

This week Shona Galt shares some insights from polls of people working in schools, conducted via the Teacher Tapp app

## Pupil pass-the-parcel: the game everyone plays

Shona Galt, intern, TeacherTapp

It seems impossible that nearly 50,000 pupils disappeared from schools last year for no apparent reason. But this is exactly what the Education Policy Institute's most recent report revealed last week: between 2016 and 2017, one in twelve students didn't progress from year 10 to 11 in the same state-funded secondary school, for reasons that weren't a permanent exclusion or family move, or switching to a higher-rated school or special school.

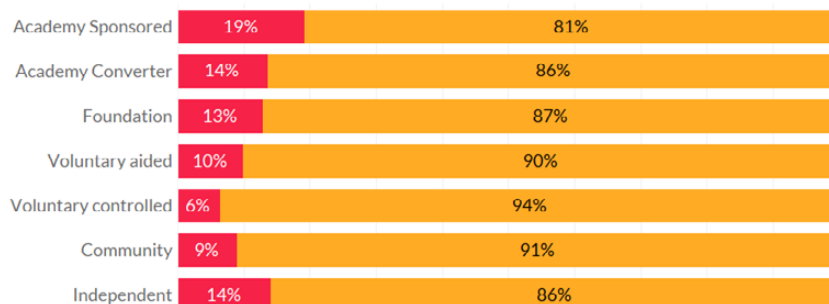
There are other reasons why this might be. Families might put their child into private schools, for example. Yet we'd expect this sort of decision to happen more in other year groups, given the substantial negative consequences for children switching amid their GCSEs. For several years, therefore, there's been a growing feeling from journalists and politicians that perhaps these children are being forced out of the schools to shunt their results from league tables.

According to our recent Teacher Tapp survey data, teachers are sharing this growing feeling.

Among our panel of more than 3,000 teachers, 14 per cent said their school had formally excluded or encouraged a pupil to leave "to protect the school's exam results". That figure is higher in secondary schools, and particularly in those rated Requires Improvement or Inadequate. In these schools, 22 per cent of teachers reported cases of missing pupils, many of whom never pop up again in someone else's classroom.

One of the many problems with the current accountability system is that students who leaders can see are likely to get very low progress scores will contribute negatively to performance measures. Being under pressure to turn around a poor Ofsted judgment (particularly if there is a fight for pupils to fill places),

Do you believe your school has ever excluded a pupil or encouraged them to leave in order to improve the school's results?



Question answered by 2,778 panellists on 04/04/2019

No  
Yes

creates a strong incentive to engage in a game of pupil pass-the-parcel.

We found that school type matters for off-rolled students. In sponsored academies – the schools forcibly taken over because of poor historic performance – one in five teachers said their school had excluded students to protect results. That is the highest across the state sector.

Why? One hypothesis is that sponsored academies are under huge pressure to improve their results.

Think not, however, that this means those outside the accountability system escape the pressure. Private schools often ask students to leave to protect their results too. There are no regulatory controls in this sector – something that we should remember and therefore treat their headline exam results with a pinch of salt.

What's possibly most alarming is a double incentive to push out pupils with special needs. Cash-strapped schools with resource units for special educational needs can off-roll pupils halfway through the year, neatly dropping their results, but still keep their £10,000 from the local authority. For schools struggling to stretch funds to pay their teachers adequately, extra dosh becomes attractive.

At various times the government has said it would remove the "perverse



incentive" by making schools accountable for the exam results of pupils until they're in another permanent school. Alternatively, schools could receive a percentage of the grade score, proportionate to the time pupils stayed at the school.

Angela Rayner, the shadow education secretary, has now committed to doing the same. Ofsted too is proposing to track schools with exceptional exclusion rates to clamp down on ousting kids for self-gain.

It all feels like rather slow progress, however. These issues were first mooted in 2010 and the whole thing has got worse since. The fixes are reasonably quick and it's beyond bewilderment why they haven't yet happened. Fifty-five thousand children are relying on us to solve this problem. There's no time to wait.



# Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is  
Jon Hutchinson

@JON\_HUTCHINSON\_

## A part-transcript of a power and conflict poetry lesson with year 11 – “My Last Duchess”

Claire Stoneman  
@stoneman\_claire

No matter how long you've been in the classroom, when an observer enters your classroom, you still get that flash of anxiety. It is, therefore, difficult to overstate the professional courage and generosity offered by Claire Stoneman, who invited more than 30 teachers from around the country to watch an English lesson at ResearchEd Birmingham. She has transcribed the whole thing in this fascinating post. One thing that stands out for me is the way that watertight routines are presented within a “purpose over power” context. For example: “Year 11 enter in silence...CS hands them the Do Now as they enter...CS waits for a minute as pupils unpack bags quickly. Scans room. Doesn't move from spot... Pupils sit down immediately with no fuss. It is 54 seconds into the lesson.”

## Do students have agency or not?

Tom Sherrington  
@teacherhead

There are few people writing about education who can synthesise and

## TOP BLOGS of the week



summarise the best available evidence like Tom Sherrington does. What makes his work so compelling is that the real-life classroom is always centre-ground, with common sense applications constantly offered. More than this, though, he takes on the thorny debates in education, and does so without bombast, cutting through ideology and dogma on either side. Such is the case with this post, which tackles student agency. Whilst acknowledging the efficacy, and at times necessity, of “no-excuses” behaviour policies, Sherrington asserts that: “Silent corridors can't be an end-goal; surely they can only be a means to an end. At some point they have to be phased out if true agency and sincere trust are to be fostered.” This measured analysis offers huge amounts in our shared goal of fostering positive use of student agency.

## Testing really isn't the problem

Simon Smith  
@smithsmm

Every year at its annual conference the National Education Union passes motions to abolish everything. And every year Twitter dives into their respective trenches and begins hurling grenades. This year was

different, though, because Jeremy Corbyn promised that Labour, if elected, would abolish SATs. For primary headteacher Simon Smith, however, the tests are the wrong target. The “real issue is the accountability inherent in current set-up. Let's not forget it was never meant to be like this. There were never supposed to be league tables and school comparisons. These are the things that create the crazy culture. Our current accountability system is fundamentally damaging to schools, staff and ultimately pupils.” There is a danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater in addressing legitimate concerns around accountability. Testing can be a powerful learning tool, and is more valid, reliable and fair than teacher assessment. So it's pleasing that, despite their many shortcomings, Smith opens with “I'm going to say it I don't agree with the idea of getting rid of SATs”.

## Zero tolerance

The Grumpy Teacher  
@grumpyteacher17

Both advocates and dissenters of “zero-tolerance” get a fair hearing from the Grumpy Teacher. (S)he begins by listing the “tremendous advantages to a zero-tolerance approach...it promotes good behaviour...[is] consistent...eliminates the whole ‘he's all right for me’ culture...and I do very much recognise that some teachers can undermine others by being too lax”. So what's not to love? Well, for Grumpy Teacher, zero-tolerance is chemotherapy. It may well blitz chaotic behaviour, but in doing so it eradicates flexibility, basic common sense, and, most damagingly, teachers' relationships with their pupils. A number of powerful examples show where context would override the immediate consequence for any violation of the “rules”. I'm sympathetic to the zero-tolerance line, but Grumpy even convinced me to let off the 13-year-old cricketer who shouted “Oh for fuck's sake” in front of a teacher from another school.

CLICK ON REVIEWS TO VIEW BLOGS +





## SATs are the fairest way to judge pupil progress

### Rob, comment

How can you possibly say SATs have no consequences for pupils? Secondary score progress measures and predictions are based on key stage 2 SATs scores. If a pupil gets a high SATs score, the expectations of that pupil are completely different from one with a low score. Teacher expectation makes such a difference.

End of key stage assessments are not a problem in themselves. Start using them in high-stakes ways and we have the situation we are in now.

### Chris West (response to the comment above)

Absolutely agree that the high-stakes nature of end of key stage assessments is the main problem, especially when combined with the naïve analysis encouraged by lack of contextualisation. Disagree that the consequences for pupils that you outline are a necessary part of SATs, though. We should distinguish between "predictions" and "estimates" for a start – statistical models provide estimates, teachers provide predictions.

Also, the evidence for teacher expectations driving pupil performance is complex and problematic in many ways, but it is almost certainly minimal compared with all the other factors. A good school will, amongst so much else, seek to maximise pupils' exam results and leaving a pupil to coast is not an option now, and shouldn't be in the future, no matter the accountability regime.

## The edtech strategy is a great leap – but backwards

### Kevin Mattinson

It's the basic infrastructure that's missing. If you don't have wifi with suitable bandwidth, how do you get learners connected to the internet or intranet? Until classrooms are connected to give all of the learners in that room the type of bandwidth access they experience at home, edtech will be in the doldrums.

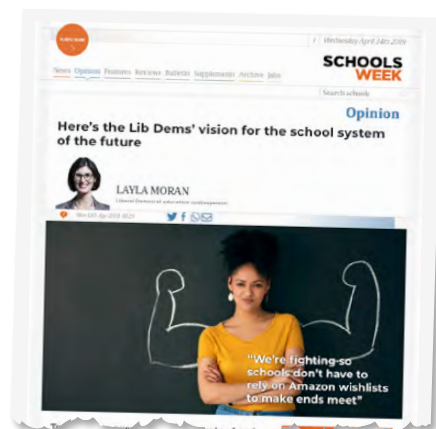
## REPLY OF THE WEEK Ken

### Here's the Lib-Dems' vision for the school system of the future

I'm a sometimes Lib-Dem voter and concerned about education. However, this post seems to have a lot on what would be scrapped, but very little on what would be done. Commitment to maintain teacher salaries in line

with inflation no matter what, but no discussion of how this is financed; scrapping of SATs, but no discussion of how academic standards would be maintained; scrapping of Ofsted for a "teacher-led" surveillance body, but with no mention of how parent voices would be maintained, and no mention of how independence of scrutiny would be maintained.

I'm left with a disappointed "baby out with bathwater", feeling. I am also mildly frustrated as this is an important topic that needs to be explored. Changes are needed, but come on Layla, show us some detail.



**THE REPLY OF THE WEEK WINS A SCHOOLS WEEK MUG. CONTACT US AT [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:news@schoolsweek.co.uk) TO CLAIM**

### James Wilding

Once again, the DfE has found it easier to start from scratch than build on the good work previously managed. Not only is the "new" view so last century in construct, supporting teaching rather than learning, it also fails to grasp some of the really big nettles that have grown over the edtech landscape in recent years, brought about by the widespread academisation of our schools. It's time we adopted ... protocols in education, involving universally available free software working on any device and with suitably supported free filtering and safe-harbour for its users. That really is not difficult to agree with anyone, anywhere, and hardly requires a Brexit lifetime of interminable debate.

### Christopher Pipe

Suitably sarcastic article. Compare the £10 million on offer with the £900 million that funded the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative in the 1980s and 1990s and sought only to help pupils aged 14-18. Why did it get such funding? Because the money didn't come from the education department!

# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## FRIDAY

Week in Westminster enjoyed its first Easter bank holiday weekend off in years after we were refused entry to the annual conference of the NASUWT teaching union.

We were told there weren't enough press passes for us to go along when we enquired back in March. We most definitely don't think the real reason for our exclusion might have something to do with the stories we've published about internal strife at the struggling union.

Never mind, we enjoyed spending some time in the sun!

## TUESDAY

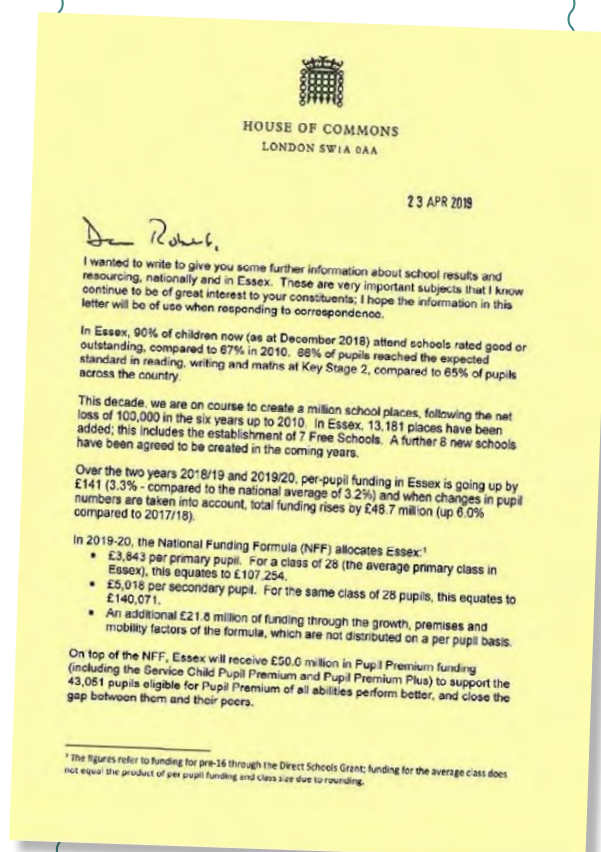
There was excitement in the air this week as almost everyone on Twitter announced they are standing in the European Parliament elections.

Among the parties to announce its line-up was Change UK, or The Independent Group, or CHUKTIG, or whatever.

Chuka Umunna, one of the leading Tiggers, told a press conference that "there will be no fence-sitting or ambiguity by Change UK".

His promise would be more reassuring and refreshing had Ann Coffey, CHUK's education spokesperson, not recently given an interview to the Guardian in which she managed to say nothing at all of note.

"I would not want change for change's sake, but changes that will genuinely achieve the objective of



giving opportunity to every child, and made on the basis of evidence of what will work and what won't," she said.

How's that work to tackle ambiguity and fence-sitting coming along, folks?

## WEDNESDAY

With rumours swirling about the prime minister's plans to step down, it seems every Conservative MP in parliament is lining up to stake their claim in a leadership bid.

So when Nick Gibb, the long-serving schools minister, was announced as a keynote speaker at an event run by influential think-tank the Social Market Foundation, it certainly raised some eyebrows.

According to the organisation, Gibb will set out "an ambitious vision for reform of economic and social policy" during his speech on April 30.

Using the hashtag #ABarelyCodedLeadershipBid former government adviser Jonathan Simons tweeted: "An ambitious, wide ranging speech? Let joy among edu twitter be unconfined!"

## THURSDAY

With school funding very much on the agenda at the moment in the run-up to the local elections, Damian Hinds has been in touch with MPs to remind them just how generous the government has been to their constituencies.

Robert Halfon, chair of the education committee and MP for Harlow, in Essex, tweeted a letter from the education secretary which set out how much Essex schools will receive under the new national funding formula, and how much per-pupil funding will go up in the coming years.

How kind of him!

It's no wonder ministers are getting jittery, though. In a parliamentary debate on school funding this week, Tory MP after Tory MP stood up to warn of problems in their local areas. Week in Westminster wonders if they've heard similar issues raised on the doorstep to those heard in 2017...



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Further details on the position and how to apply can be requested from [russellsheldon88@gmail.com](mailto:russellsheldon88@gmail.com)

**Closing date: 30th May 2019.**



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The South Coast Region will consist of six academies (2 primaries, 1 junior, 2 secondary and 1 all-through) in September 2019, with the Livingstone Academy Bournemouth all-through planned opening in 2020. The intention is to further grow the District.

**Application forms, job description and further details are available from [www.aspirationsacademies.org/work-for-us/](http://www.aspirationsacademies.org/work-for-us/) or by contacting Caroline Barringer, The Aspirations Academies Trust, email: [carolinebarringer@aspirationsacademies.org](mailto:carolinebarringer@aspirationsacademies.org)**

Closing date: Friday 3rd May 2019

If you would like a confidential discussion with the Managing Director about the role, please contact Caroline Barringer and she will arrange this.

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## PRINCIPAL

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Visits to the school are warmly welcomed and will take place on **Thursday 2nd May 2019 (1.00pm - 2.00pm)**, **Tuesday 7th May 2019 (10.00am - 11.00am)** and **Monday 13th May 2019 (12 noon - 1.00pm)**

Please contact the Executive Principal's PA at [principalrecruitment@ilpartnership.org](mailto:principalrecruitment@ilpartnership.org) if you wish to come along on one of these days.

**Closing Date:** Tuesday 14th May 2019 (noon)

**Interview Dates:** Monday 20th May 2019 from 3.30pm to meet staff and Trustees

Tuesday 21st and Wednesday 22nd May 2019

**How to apply:** Download an application pack from either the Inspire Learning Partnership website:

[www.inspirelearningpartnership.org](http://www.inspirelearningpartnership.org) or Kanes Hill Primary School website: [www.kaneshillsch.net](http://www.kaneshillsch.net)

The Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This role requires an enhanced DBS check.

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