

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

2019 in review:
8-page special!

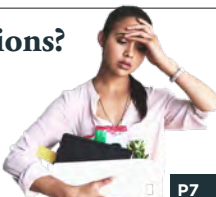
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'What an earthquake we have created'



- ✓ No-notice Ofsteds on cards after Tory victory
- ✓ Johnson promises 'record spending' on schools
- ✓ Education MPs hold their seats (and some new faces)

Full story from dramatic election night on page 4

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FRIDAY 7 FEB 2020 | WESTMINSTER, LONDON

SCHOOLS WEEK

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'I'm on the frontline': Fighting pupils' mobile phone addiction

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Editor scoops prestigious journo award

Schools Week editor John Dickens won a top award this week at the prestigious British Journalism Awards.

Dickens won the specialist journalism category for his exposé of academies minister Lord Agnew's claims that schools were wasting £35 million.

Judges said the piece was "journalism which had a strong narrative and a significant impact on the political agenda".

His story revealed how Agnew's cost-cutting advisers had told one school to reduce its lunch portions, and another to keep money that it had raised for charity.

The then-prime minister Theresa May was questioned on the findings in parliament amid claims that the advice "belonged to the days of the workhouse".

Billy Camden, chief reporter at sister paper *FE Week*, was also shortlisted for the award.

Dickens said: "To have two journalists shortlisted in such a well-contested category is a huge achievement and testament to the strength of our investigative journalism."



John Dickens receiving his award

Shane Mann, managing director of the papers' publisher Lsect, said Dickens' win was "an amazing achievement". "Having both our newspapers shortlisted was a huge achievement for all of the team. We are passionate about providing in-depth, investigative education journalism, determined to get past the bluster and explain the facts to our readers. These awards recognised the very best of journalism in the UK and I am very proud that we were part that."

The ceremony was held at the Hilton Bankside Hotel in central London on Tuesday night.



Election watch



Johnson pledges 'record spending' on schools

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER
@SCHOOLSWEEK

Schools are facing the prospect of three-day, no-notice Ofsted inspections after the Conservatives won a majority in yesterday's general election.

Boris Johnson secured the biggest Conservative party election win since 1987, propelling him back into Downing Street with a mandate for his education priorities.

The Conservatives' manifesto mostly signalled a business as usual approach to education policy, with commitments to back headteachers on issues like discipline, build more free schools and small grant funding pledges for PE teaching, the arts and wraparound childcare.

Speaking earlier this morning, Johnson also promised "record spending on schools".

However, it does also include an ambiguous pledge to "ensure that parents can choose the schools that best suit their children", which some have suggested could lead to the expansion of academic selection by the back door.

Others have also suggested the majority could see the government push through full academisation.

Following the release of the manifesto, Johnson pledged to trial no-notice inspections of schools by Ofsted, and to increase the length of inspections from two to three days – plans that did not go down well with the sector.

The prime minister's re-election, with a predicted majority of 78, means most of this

policy platform is likely to be set in motion.

However policy experts have warned the no-notice element of inspections has proved unpopular before and is likely to be dropped after consultation.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT union, said: "Now is the time to shelve election rhetoric, listen to the profession, and establish the support that is needed and deliver it well."

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said Johnson inherits a "daunting 'to do' list on education", with ending school cuts and child poverty and addressing teacher recruitment and retention as priorities.

Johnson had already pledged to increase school spending by £7.1 billion by 2022-23, although the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said this will result in spending per pupil being "no higher in 2022-23 than it was 13 years earlier".

Johnson, speaking in the early hours of this morning, said: "We must understand now what an earthquake we have created. The way in which we have changed the political map in this country.

"We have to grapple with the consequences of



that. We have to change our own party."

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, urged the new administration to "reflect the values of one-nation conservatism and join with us in striving for a system which works for all our young people".

Loic Menzies, chief executive of The Centre for Education and Youth think tank, said Johnson must "deliver on his promise that this will be a different kind of Conservative government that invests".

Meanwhile Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to remain in his role during a "period of reflection" for his party, despite posting the worst Labour election result since 1935.

However, he said he would not lead the party into the next general election.

Education MPs return (and there's a few new faces)

Jonathan Gullis had to return to his job as secondary teacher at Halifax Academy, in Birmingham, just hours after winning Stoke-on-Trent North for the Conservatives from Labour.

The NASUWT representative told the Stoke-on-Trent Live website: "From a young age all I've wanted to do is make a difference in people's lives. That's why I became a teacher, and the reason I want to be an MP is to do it on a much larger scale."

Richard Holden, formerly Gavin Williamson's special adviser, won the North West Durham seat from Labour's Laura Pidcock. He said it was "truly the greatest honour that can be

bestowed on anyone".

But in Newcastle North, former Parents and Teachers for Excellence boss Mark Lehain failed in his bid to take the seat from Labour's Cat McKinnell.

Elsewhere the education MPs held onto their seats.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, was re-elected in his safe Conservative seat of South Staffordshire, while his opposite number Angela Rayner re-rook Ashton-under-Lyne, albeit with a reduced majority.

Schools minister Nick Gibb returns as MP for Bognor Regis and

Littlehampton, as does shadow schools minister Mike Kane in Wythenshawe and Sale East.

Robert Halfon, the education committee chair in the 2017 to 2019 Parliament, has also been re-elected in Harlow.

But Gordon Marsden, the shadow skills minister, lost his Blackpool South seat to the Conservatives.

Layla Moran, the Liberal Democrats' education spokesperson, is now tipped as a future leader after Jo Swinson lost her seat, was returned as the MP for Oxford West and Abingdon, with a larger majority.



Election watch

Fall in school polling stations, but 1 in 6 disrupted

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The number of schools used as polling stations has fallen by almost 10 per cent since the last general election, but more than one in six will still be disrupted by voters.

However, a *Schools Week* investigation has also found that just three councils nationally (less than two per cent) have taken up the government's promise of extra funding to avoid using schools as polling stations.

Across the 180 district, unitary, metropolitan and London councils that responded to our enquiries, 2,117 schools were used for yesterday's election. The same councils used 2,346 schools in 2017.

If the average number of schools were expanded across all 317 areas nationally, it would mean 3,728 schools (18.5 per cent of schools nationally) were used yesterday.

Returning officers, responsible for overseeing elections in each constituency, can force any state-funded school to become a polling station.

But the decision as to whether to close the school rests with the headteacher and chair of governors.

The announcement in late October that the election would take place less than two weeks before Christmas prompted immediate warnings from headteachers.

Schools Week revealed that one in 12 primary teachers said that turning schools into polling stations would disrupt their end-of-term activities.

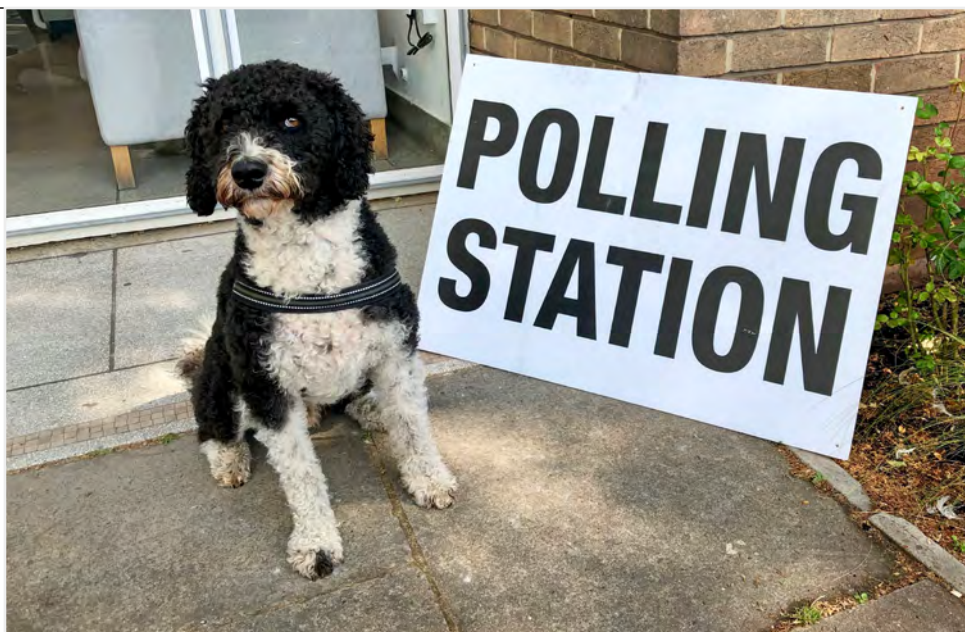
The government wrote to returning officers on November 4 promising to "reimburse the necessary costs where needed ... [for] alternative venues to avoid disrupting long-planned and important events".

But of the 180 councils that responded to *Schools Week's* request for information, only three said they would take advantage of the offer.

Most authorities said the offer had come too late – with polling cards already printed in some areas.

In Sheffield, the council used 14 schools as polling stations in 2017. This year, it reduced its numbers to nine.

James Henderson, Sheffield City Council's director of policy and performance, said that his authority had already been "trying



to move away from using schools in recent years", particularly in light of recent snap elections, and the "disruption this can cause to children's education".

Henderson noted the government's "willingness to cover additional costs" of using other facilities instead of schools, but said that this was "part of the overall expectation that a winter election will inevitably incur additional polling-station hire costs".

In Bath and North East Somerset, two alternative venues have been found for which the council will claim additional funding, but the overall number of schools used since 2017 has actually increased because of a boundary review and shortage of other venues.

For most councils, however, the offer of extra funding has made no difference.

For example, Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council said that a review to change polling places "typically takes several months" and it was "not possible" to "simply switch to another venue as a one-off alternative".

Cornwall Council said the offer of additional funding "pre-supposed" that councils were using schools to keep down costs and that other premises were available, and "neither condition applies in Cornwall".

Peter Stanyon, the chief executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators, said he was "not surprised" by the drop in numbers of schools used "as numerous

election teams did try to avoid using them".

But he added: "If the government decides that it would prefer schools not to be used as polling stations in the future, we would expect to see this reflected in both official guidance and budgets made available to administer elections," he told *Schools Week*.

Our data shows that primary schools still overwhelmingly bear the brunt of polling station duties.

The 163 councils that broke down their response by type of school reported using 1,713 primary schools, or 88 per cent, and just 143 secondary schools between them.

Eighty-four schools were described as something other than a state primary or secondary – for example, all-through schools, middle schools or private schools.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT union, said headteachers accepted that schools were sometimes the only options available, but that "significant disruption" caused by recent short-notice elections had led to questions over their use.

"Given how much re-jigging school leaders have had to do for this election, and how hard it has been to keep education on the radar, it is unsurprising that attitudes to host polling stations have changed," he added.

The extent of disruption to schools remains unclear. Only 108 of the councils that responded were able to say whether schools had closed, and of the 816 schools used by those 108 councils, 382, or 47 per cent, were either fully or partially closed.

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Trust 'fires' governors who sounded cash crisis alarm

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

An academy trust "fired" a school's board of governors and accused them of causing "reputational damage" just one week after they complained about financial management.

Former governors at Dearne Advanced Learning Centre, in Barnsley, claim they were left unable to afford exercise books with teachers buying their own gluesticks and calculators while hundreds of thousands of pounds was top-sliced by Astrea Academy Trust.

The school voluntarily became an academy and joined the trust in February to improve after two straight 'requires improvement' Ofsted ratings.

However, former governors allege the trust drained the finances of the school, now known as The Dearne Academy, while giving "nothing back".

Astrea disputes this – claiming it is "open to constructive challenge" and accused some staff of "behaviours that undermine the core mission of the school, which is to improve pupils' lives".

But the fallout has prompted warnings that the "significant cultural change" of a school joining a trust should not be "underplayed".

Sam Henson, director of policy and information at the National Governance Association, said a "level of influence" is needed to "give local governance a true and meaningful purpose".

But he added: "While those at local level should retain influence, they need to understand and accept that their delegated functions may be removed or limited upon joining multi-academy trusts."

At a board meeting on November 21, Dearne governors raised concerns about the total departmental resources budget being cut from between £50,000 and £60,000 to just £13,000, and Astrea also imposing a 6.5 per cent top slice, equating to £380,000. The resources budget was later raised to £34,000, though.

Schools Week understands governors



warned that staff morale was low, with an unusually high number of resignations and a lack of continuing professional development.

On November 29, they received a letter from Astrea's chief executive, Libby Nicholas, saying they would be replaced with a "transition management board". Former governors were told to contact Nicholas if they wanted a position on the new board. An Astrea spokesperson insisted that four of the 11 former governors have positions on the board.

In the letter, seen by Schools Week, Nicholas wrote: "There has been particular concern that a small number of people have actively sought to undermine the successful onboarding of The Dearne.

"This has included the causing of reputational damage to Astrea and, by extension, The Dearne itself."

Former governors allege they were fired for challenging the trust. One governor, who wished to remain anonymous, said: "We've gone from being a fairly well-resourced school to not having anything.

"I actually feel so let down by a trust that promises a lot. This should be working for the families and children of the Dearne Valley but it's not. Sacking or dismissing or reining in the governors for asking challenging questions is not the way to do it."

Another governor accused Astrea of "taking our money and giving us nothing back for it. That's the truth.

"A governing body should be providing challenge to the senior leadership team, and I don't think they're interested in that."

Alona Baird, a NASUWT representative

who left her position as maths teacher at the school in August, told Schools Week she had to buy her own gluesticks, pencils, rubbers and paper for classes, and other teachers "across the school" did the same.

"A lot of our children are looked-after children and it's difficult for them to bring equipment."

However, Astrea disputes these accounts.

A spokesperson for the trust, which has 27 schools across Cambridgeshire and Yorkshire, insisted the governing board was not fired but "converted" to a new transition board until governance "is more stable".

She said the school had a "significant structural deficit" when it joined Astrea and budgets are set by the principal.

She also claimed the previous governing board "misunderstood its responsibilities on how to balance fiscal decisions with protecting teaching and learning."

Furthermore, she said it was a "fundamental misunderstanding" to ask what schools get in return for the top-slice, and insisted there was "no separation between 'the trust' and the schools" with "myriad" support on offer.

"We understand change is difficult but adults need to remember who matters most here – and that for us will always be our pupils."

The position of local governing bodies in academy trusts is changing. In 2016, E-Act revealed it would scrap its governors in favour of "academy ambassadorial bodies", while in October, Academies Enterprise Trust said it had removed all parent governors.

Government admits CEO pay cuts down to 'good will'

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

The government won't reveal which academy trusts cut their chief executive pay following warning letters – admitting ministers have no power to intervene so are reliant on the "good will" of trusts to slash salaries.

The admission comes in a ruling by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) which backed the Department for Education's refusal to publish the names of trusts that have cut pay.

Since 2017 the Education and Skills Funding Agency has sent letters to academy trusts which have somebody paid above £150,000 or multiple salaries between £100,000 and £150,000 – asking for evidence to justify paying such high salaries from taxpayers' cash.

Every trust that has received a letter is named online.

But the DfE said negotiations with trusts are based on "co-operation and good will". Naming chains could "sour relationships" and potentially "prejudice the whole process", they added.

The ruling highlights the department's total lack of power in the fight to police CEO pay in the academy sector.

Tom Richmond, director of education think tank EDSK, said "full transparency" over the use of public money is "essential".

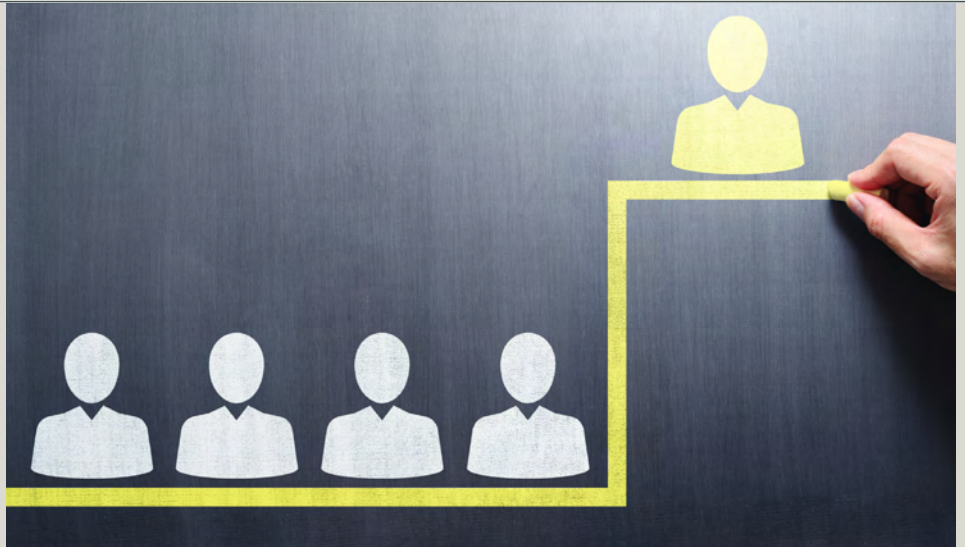
"If some trusts are complying with the government's wishes on executive pay while others are not, this information should be placed into the public domain so that everyone can form their own judgement about the behaviour of each trust."

In November 2018, the ESFA reported two trusts had implemented immediate significant reduction in salaries following the letter, 11 committed to reducing salaries and 43 agreed to review pay policy.

The vast majority – 131 – proved they had been compliant in setting their CEO pay.

However a Freedom of Information request to name the specific trusts was declined by the DfE and, following a lengthy review process, the decision was subsequently upheld by the ICO.

They agreed with the DfE's submission that disclosure "would disrupt relationships with the trusts".



The DfE told the ICO it "does not have legislative or statutory powers to restrain, cap or reduce any perceived excessive pay in the sector".

"Negotiations to understand and justify high pay and reduce it where necessary are based on cooperation and good will... the DfE argues it is vital it is not perceived to be 'naming and shaming' the trusts it has worked with or continues to work with as any reductions made to salaries are done so in good will.

"To sour such negotiations and relationships through disclosures of this nature, and therefore reduce the likelihood that excessive pay levels will be addressed, it is argued, cannot be in the public interest."

The DfE's submission also reveals each trust is "approached individually about their pay" and considered on a "case-by-case basis as opposed to having uniform criteria every trust must adhere to".

Sam Henson, director of policy at the National Governance Association, said the DfE's approach had "limited success" in encouraging a reduction in pay and was compounded by difficulties in rolling back pay once a contract is agreed.

"Ultimately the issue goes beyond guidelines set by the ESFA, and largely comes down to a consideration of the ethical dilemmas that can be attributed to the culture of the organisation," said Henson.

The DfE letters were sent as part of a clampdown on CEO pay by academies minister Lord Agnew (pictured).

A Schools Week investigation found at least

23 academy chiefs are now earning more than £200,000 – with Dan Moynihan of the Harris Federation topping the list with a £440,000 salary.

But the DfE said its negotiations with trusts are delicate, adding naming chains could "upturn discussions" that were objective into a "subjective free-for-all in the public domain". Bosses would be identified and put under pressure to reduce pay, they added.

Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said the government was "absolutely right" in not disclosing further information.

"Pay is a necessary but not sufficient consideration in attracting and retaining talented leaders who can lead large, complex organisations – in both educational and financial terms – and ensure the best possible outcomes for children."



Schools and councils 'falling foul' of exclusion regulations

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

The support available to excluded pupils outside London is almost non-existent, lawyers have warned, amid concerns that schools are hiring barristers to oversee appeals.

Alex Temple, a lawyer with charity Just for Kids Law, claimed schools and councils were also "failing really basic points" such as offering incorrect guidance or not providing board minutes.

He said the charity discovered the discrepancies after expanding its operation outside London and into the West Midlands and Greater Manchester in October.

Temple said the cases taken on by the charity in Birmingham, Northamptonshire and Trafford reveal "a bizarre bureaucratic quagmire in which each local authority has developed its own set of rules and is just completely disregarding how its job is meant to be discharged under national regulations".

In Trafford, the council published guidance on their website saying that schools could convert fixed-term exclusions to permanent exclusions, which, according to Temple, "explicitly contradicted national guidance". After the charity raised the issue with the council, they updated the guidance.

A spokesperson for Trafford Council insisted the guidance was not "illegal", but accepted that it included a statement from 2017 that "may not have been amended" when the latest government guidance was updated.

Permanent exclusions have been rising since 2012-13, up to 7,900; however, they still remain low at just 0.1 per cent of the school population.

The North East had the highest rate of permanent exclusion with 14 per 10,000 pupils, followed by the North West and West Midlands on 13. The South East had the lowest rate (six).

Jules Daulby, an inclusion and literacy specialist, said exclusions are a "postcode lottery" with "no consistency" in the behaviour policies between different schools or areas.



Parents can request a review of a permanent exclusion, but just 640 reviews were lodged in that period, with 79 (12 per cent) resulting in an offer of reinstatement.

Temple also said there was "absolutely no provision or support for young people facing exclusion" in areas outside London.

He had also heard that schools were hiring lawyers to help represent them in exclusion tribunals, even in cases when the family did not have legal representation

"I've heard of barristers being instructed to represent schools, basically whenever the family is constructing an argument that suggests it has a grasp of the law, or even being instructed to come to represent them at the very first instance at the governors' body hearing.

"When exclusions get to the tribunal, some families are represented [by lawyers] but schools are always represented no matter what. One hundred per cent of the time, schools have lawyers paid for by the state when families are denied that, because there is no legal aid available for them."



Jules Daulby

The charity has launched a new online resource called the School Exclusions Hub, offering advice, guidance and tools to families who want to challenge exclusion.

It comes as Boris Johnson has vowed to give schools the "powers they need to deal with bad behaviour".

A poll by Teacher Tapp found that if teachers were given a 'magic wand and able to change just one thing about teaching, they would be most likely to want 'every child's behaviour to be good enough so that learning is never disrupted'.

But Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the decision to exclude is "never taken lightly" and "sometimes necessary to ensure that other pupils are able to learn in a safe and well-ordered environment".

He said early intervention is essential to prevent behavioural issues escalating to exclusion, adding that cuts to school budgets have affected provision.

"Despite these pressures, the vast majority of schools continue to do their very best to prevent the need for an exclusion. When an exclusion does take place, they are required to follow detailed statutory guidance that includes the right of parents to an independent review-panel hearing."

Former education secretary Damian Hinds announced the first substantive review of government behaviour guidance in more than three years. That includes a £10 million pot to train teachers how to deal with unruly pupils.

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David Thorpe, Compliance Manager at Rotherham Aspire PRU

Schools on the frontline



The staff on a mission to help vulnerable pupils at Xmas

For children living in poverty, school provides much more than just an education – it's a lifeline.

Thousands of pupils across England are dreading the approaching Christmas holiday as the structure, safety and regular meals they have come to depend on are replaced with hunger, fear and instability.

A recent report from Shelter revealed 126,000 children in England are currently without a home or living in temporary accommodation – around 3,000 more than last year.

A further 4,000 children are expected to become homeless between now and Christmas Day.

Schools can often be left powerless during the interim, but *Schools Week* caught up with the school staff determined to make a difference.

Matthew Tate, headteacher of Hartsdown Academy in Margate, is attempting to raise £5,000 to provide Christmas hampers for families on the breadline in Thanet.

The school previously staged an annual Christmas dinner for pupils in need over the break but due to vital building work cannot do so this year.

He is hoping to create 100 hampers which will include food, toiletries and children's toys – 50 of which will be going to children in his own school, while others will be distributed to local primary schools.

The school already provides clothes, food and toiletries to around 100 pupils each month.

"It's heartbreaking to see how many children look miserable as they head out the school gates for the Christmas holidays," said Tate.

"We know a lot of our families are in crisis and that's the same with a lot of schools in the area."

Tate said around 50 per cent of his 700 pupils receive free school meals and the school regularly washes pupils' clothes, opens early to provide free breakfast and liaises with social services to secure the interests of the children.



He added: "We always see a spike in safeguarding concerns in the run-up to school holidays as children begin to worry what will happen without the security of the school."

According to Shelter's *Generation Homeless* report, released last week, there are 155 children within the Thanet local authority who are homeless or in temporary accommodation.

These children, Tate explained, are often placed far away from school, placing extra strain on the family and leaving the children vulnerable to "active" county lines gangs in the area.

A recent poll from the National Education Union revealed 63 per cent of teachers were worried more children than last year will be going hungry over the festive period.

The survey found teachers often resorted to opening food banks, running collections and preparing Christmas hampers in an effort to help out.

Shelter's report ranked Newham as the joint worst local authority in England – with one in every 12 children homeless or in temporary accommodation.

Omar Deria, headteacher at The Cumberland School in Newham, said poverty wasn't just an issue at Christmas but a "tragic" daily battle.

This year alone has seen five pupils made homeless, he said.

The school has even established a 'Hardship Fund' of £1,000 available for quick access for pupils in need.

This Christmas the school is dipping into the fund to provide a food hamper for a particularly deprived pupil whose family would otherwise go hungry.

Deria added: "I've worked in Newham for 13 years and it's progressively got worse. We make sure pupils don't go hungry in school but unless they have stability it is very difficult to teach them."

Both Deria and Tate praised their staff and admitted dealing with child poverty on a daily basis takes its toll on staff.

Mark Phillips, headteacher of Deptford Green School in nearby Lewisham, where one in 16 children are homeless, added:

"Teachers don't teach in schools like mine unless they are dedicated to what they do."

"The tragedy is the teaching profession isn't as well-valued as it should be by the government."

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93



Free school head renews criticism of smartphone culture

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

An outspoken free school head has insisted she doesn't blame parents who won't make children give up their smartphones, after warning in a memo to governors that "too many parents do not take GCSEs seriously".

Documents from minutes of the Michaela Community School governing board, obtained by *Schools Week*, show Katharine Birbalsingh warned earlier this year that "too many pupils" refused to work at home and some parents were "unwilling" to take their phones from them.

The school, dubbed "Britain's strictest", celebrated an extraordinary first set of GCSE results this summer.

But Birbalsingh, an outspoken critic of smartphones who believes the government should consider banning their use by under-16s, told *Schools Week* this week that pupils still "could've done better".

In the memo, issued in April, the headteacher warned that parents don't take away phones "because screens keep their children occupied".

The school runs compulsory homework club for pupils who don't complete work at home, but Birbalsingh says staff can only stay until 6pm "and sadly, this isn't enough".

"We are doing everything we can for them, but there comes a point where the child and the parents have to take responsibility for themselves."

But speaking to *Schools Week*, Birbalsingh said: "I'm not blaming the parents. I'm saying they don't have the information, they're not knowledgeable. We need to get them the knowledge."

Michaela already confiscates any phones seen or heard anywhere on its grounds, but now also offers a "digital drop-off" scheme, where pupils can leave phones, tablets and games controllers in a safe at the school for a period to aid concentration.

Pupils hand in their technology for a day, two weeks, or "right up until they take their exams" Birbalsingh said, adding that the service is now "regularly used", especially close to exams.

The school now also offers to install the Screentime app – which regulates children's



Katharine Birbalsingh

use of iPhones – on behalf of parents who don't feel able to do it themselves. Birbalsingh also tries to persuade parents of year 6 and 7 pupils not to buy them smartphones in the first place.

The use of mobile phones by pupils has become an increasingly contentious issue in the schools sector.

Teachers are allowed by law to confiscate mobile phones as long as it is a "reasonable, proportionate" penalty, and providing the school's policy has been clearly communicated to pupils.

In February, schools minister Nick Gibb said schools should ban mobile phones, though Damian Hinds, until recently the education secretary, said the decision should be left up to head teachers.

In May, more than 45 school and academy trust leaders signed a letter pledging to run "phone-free schools".

But moves to ban phones have not been without controversy. Earlier this year, South Wigston high school in Leicester was accused of holding pupils' tech to "ransom" after charging parents £2 for the return of confiscated devices.

More needs to be done nationally to tackle the issue, Birbalsingh believes. She has previously called for a government information campaign to warn of the dangers of smartphone use, and says more drastic action may be needed.

"I'm not saying government should necessarily ban phones for under 16-year-

olds, although I think that's something we should consider."

Birbalsingh insists too few people understand that smartphones are "extremely dangerous, in particular for the most vulnerable in our society".

"What too many of the middle classes don't understand is that if mum and dad aren't at home because they're working three jobs, or if mum's an alcoholic and dad's in prison, or whatever the situation may be, then the child doesn't have the support at home to be able to get his homework done," she said.

"And if he has a phone, he's likely to be on the phone for eight hours in the evening and won't go to sleep until two in the morning and then is exhausted and is unable to do his work.

"It can be monitored by some families. Other families will struggle, and that simply isn't recognised in society."

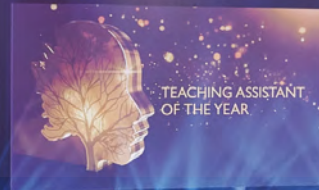
In the end, Michaela's results this year placed it in the top five of all schools nationally for progress, and the proportion of grade 7s at the school was more than double the national average.

But Birbalsingh said: "The fact is that there are families where the children don't work hard enough at home.

"That was the case then, that is the case now, we are in the inner-city, so we have a challenging intake, but all schools, it won't just be ours, all schools will struggle on this level where children simply don't do enough work at home."

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News

Spring Green head cleared of 'wrongdoing'

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

A trust chief executive and headteacher who was fired over allegations of exam cheating has been cleared of wrongdoing.

Claims of exam malpractice at the Green Spring Academy in east London were widely reported in February 2017. Trust leader Mark Keary was one of "a number" of senior staff to be suspended and later dismissed over the allegations.

At the time, the Department for Education said that "malpractice has been identified" at the school following an "investigation".

However, Green Spring Education Trust has now confirmed that the Teaching Regulation Agency found no wrongdoing by Keary.

Green Spring Academy was transferred to Mulberry Schools Trust in September 2018. Green Spring Education Trust's accounts for 2017-18 revealed that Keary had lodged an employment tribunal claim "alleging wrongful dismissal and disability discrimination". The accounts said the trust was "defending this action robustly".

A statement on GSET's website now says the trust will wind up as Keary's claim has been settled. The trust "thanks Mark for his years of service as headteacher and CEO and wishes him well in his next role".

It adds: "In relation to the allegations against Green Spring Academy Shoreditch, and Mark Keary himself, GSET acknowledges that there was no finding of cheating nor a culture of cheating in the report from the Teaching Regulation Agency."

No Teaching Regulation Agency report has been published for Keary's hearing. A spokesperson for the DfE said reports are not routinely published in cases where there is no finding of unacceptable conduct.

Unlike other professional regulators, the only sanction available to the TRA is banning teachers.

In 2018-19, 22 teachers were found guilty of exam

malpractice. Four of these were banned with no right to appeal, and 13 received no ban.

A spokesperson for GSET said that staff members had been suspended in February 2017 "following an external investigation at the request of Pearson and AQA exam boards into the alleged examination malpractices at the academy", and said that a number of staff members left "following a comprehensive and proper disciplinary process".

He refused to comment directly on Keary and what settlement was reached. No employment tribunal decision on Keary and GSET has been published. Keary could not be reached for comment.

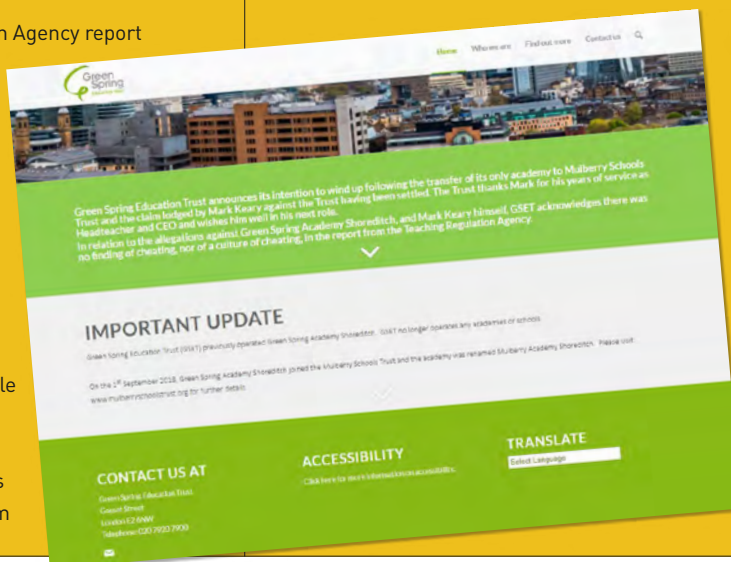
The trust leader began at the school in 2006, when it was called Bethnal Green Technology College. Then in 2012 it was given academy status and became one of the highest achieving academies in the country, with 83 per cent of pupils achieving a grade C or above in English and maths in 2016.

The BBC reported the allegations related to the academic years 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Despite being suspended in February 2017, the trust's accounts show that Keary was paid £160,000-£165,000 in 2016-17. The year before he earned up to £185,000.

In March 2017, the BBC reported claims from six former employees of a "culture of intimidation" at the school where some felt they had no choice but to cheat or leave.

Green Spring Academy became infamous in 2015 when three of its pupils – Kadiza Sultana, Amira Abase and Shamima Begum – fled to Syria in the February half-term break.



Unions ready to reinstate School Cuts campaign support

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

Unions had to suspend their support for the School Cuts campaign website to avoid falling foul of election rules.

Since the election was called on October 31, UNISON, Unite and the GMB Union pulled their support for the website, which allows voters to see how much school funding has been cut in real terms at their local schools.

Their logos were removed from the website, run by the National Education Union.

Jon Richards, head of education at UNISON, said that this was because the Lobbying Act 2014 "restricts how much money unions and others can spend on campaigns in an election year".

Unions and charities have to follow guidelines governing the amount of cash they are able to spend on campaigns during an election year.

The act makes it a legal requirement for all groups that spend more than £20,000 in England on regulated campaigning in the year leading to an election to register with the Electoral Commission.

But if a union is part of a coalition such as School Cuts, any spending on its work also counts as an individual spend for each union, meaning contributions would count twice towards their limit.

"Sadly, we've had to suspend support for vital campaigns like the School Cuts Coalition, but UNISON's name will be back on the campaign on December 13," Richards added.

A GMB spokesperson, who confirmed that they had taken the same decision, added it remains "entirely supportive of the initiative to expose the impact of nearly a decade of cuts on our schools".

If an organisation spends more than £250,000 it is required to report that to the Electoral Commission by June 12, while those spending under £250,000 have until March 12.

The NEU, which is also registered with the commission, confirmed that the unions took the decision "as soon as the election was confirmed".

It said that building "a mass broad-based campaign" has "propelled the issue of education up the list of concerns for the public" and resulted in extra funding committed by political parties.

The NEU has taken on the "minimal" costs of running the campaign.

News

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Steep rise in warning notices for private schools

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS
@PIPPA_AK

The number of warning notices issued to underperforming private schools has risen – with nearly 20 handed out on average each month.

Schools Week analysis of the 158 private school warning notices issued since November 2018 also reveals that 40 per cent went to religious schools.

Critics have said the findings show up the inadequate standard of provision in the independent faith sector.

However, the Independent Schools Association has criticised the rise in warning notices as a “heavy-handed reaction” to “relatively minor” compliance issues.

The Department for Education began publishing the warning notices in February 2018 – more than two years after a *Schools Week* campaign first demanded that the information should be made public.

Notices are issued when Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate identify breaches of the independent school standards, which all private schools must adhere to. Schools must submit an action plan and can be closed if they do not improve.

Last year, analysis by this newspaper found 148 notices were issued in the 13 months from September 2017 to October 2018, an average of about 11 a month.

However, our analysis shows between November 2018 and July 2019 – when the most recent notices were published – a total of 158 were issued, an average of almost 20 a month.

The DfE challenged our findings, saying they are skewed because notices are removed from their website when schools become compliant. They said the rise over the period was actually ten per cent – but refused to provide the figures.

Of those issued since November 2018, 63 (40 per cent) went to religious schools, with the majority going to Islamic (27) and Jewish (15) schools. Thirty-five (22 per cent) were issued to special schools.

A spokesperson for the National Secular Society it was “deeply concerning” that so many independent faith schools are “failing to give children a decent education, or in some cases even to meet basic safeguarding standards”.

“Where schools consistently fail to address concerns, the government must be prepared to de-register and close them.”



Just 13 of the schools have since closed, including Michael House School in Derbyshire which was the only school to fail on all eight standards.

Between November 2018 and July 2019, eight schools received two separate notices.

Francis Green, research lead at Private School Policy Reform, and professor of education economics at the UCL Institute of Education, said the figures “provide worrying evidence that areas of the sector – particularly private religious and special needs schools – are not nearly as impressive as the sector likes to make out, despite some eye-watering fees involved”.

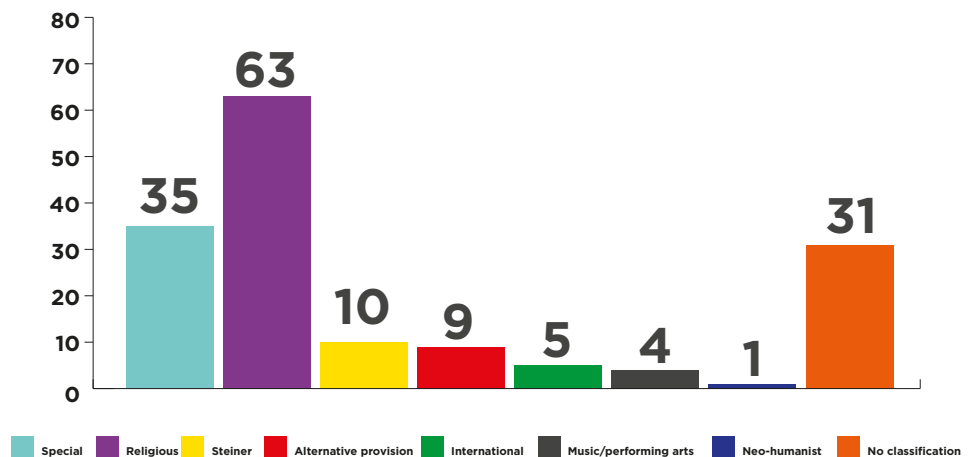
Twenty-nine notices were issued to schools that charge £30,000 a year or more. The school with the highest fees was special school Gretton School in Cambridge, which charges a maximum of £122,000. For non-special schools, The Yehudi Menuhin School in Cobham had the largest fees, charging up to £44,000.

Green added: “The government must closely examine the reasons behind the rise in warning notices for private schools and reconsider whether they are actually an effective way to ensure that private schools improve rapidly.”

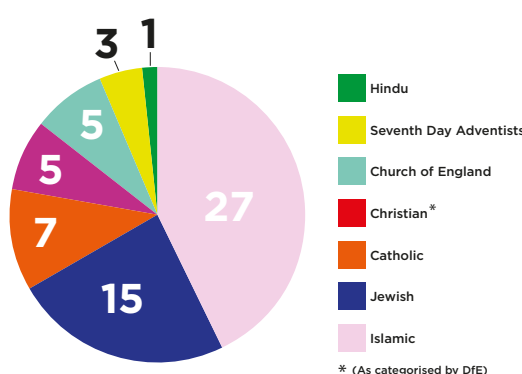
But Neil Roskilly, chief executive of The Independent Schools Association, said the increase in notices “suggests an aggressive approach from the regulator”. Schools can be slapped with warnings for “relatively minor” issues, including failing to update policies or complete the annual school census on time, or errors in completing records of staff appointments, he added.

“In many cases, the issuing of a notice is way over the top and I’m not sure that ministers fully appreciate this... DfE notices should be reserved for serious compliance issues if they are to remain credible.”

Breakdown by school type



Breakdown by religion



SCHOOLS IN RECEIPT OF TWO NOTICES **8**

NOTICES ISSUED **158**

SCHOOLS NOW CLOSED **13**

LONDON SCHOOLS **36**

HARRIS TRUST TO DITCH THREE-YEAR GCSES

PIPPA ALLEN-KINROSS

@PIPPA_AK

One of the country's largest academy trusts has told its schools to ditch three-year GCSEs by next September, despite warning the change will have "budgetary implications for any school".

Harris Federation has instructed its 27 secondary and all-through schools to make the change amid growing concerns that Ofsted will mark down schools that have an extended GCSE curriculum.

It's the latest example of schools changing their practice to meet Ofsted's new curriculum focus. Over half of schools are thought to have lengthened key stage 4.

Schools Week has reported on multiple cases of schools moving away from the two-year key stage 3 as Ofsted continues its crackdown on curriculum. Impington

Village College in Cambridge also alleged inspectors said it could not be 'outstanding' while it had a three-year GCSE period.

Education Uncovered reported this week minutes from a Harris board meeting on July 10 that show chief executive Dan Moynihan warned Ofsted "want schools to have a 3-year curriculum for key stage three and two years for GCSE and if this is not implemented, the academy will automatically be downgraded".

Although he warned that some headteachers had struggled to do this because of "budget restraints", a spokesperson for Harris clarified that all schools in the country will find that "changing lengths of key stages has budgetary implications", including changes to staffing and refurbishing specialist rooms.

The spokesperson did not respond to a query on how much Harris expected the transition to cost.

Other educationalists have also questioned the claim – saying it should be cheaper as classes, on average, are larger as pupils aren't split into different 'options'.

The Harris schools where moving to a three-year key stage 3 was "straightforward for our academies to achieve quickly" made the switch in September.

In cases where using Ofsted's transitional year would be helpful for schools to avoid "unnecessary changes to staffing, costs and upheaval", they would be expected to have it place for September 2020.

The Harris spokesperson added they "stand by the decision not to rush ahead as clearly it would not be in the best interests of students to change a curriculum without having in place the appropriate qualified teachers, teaching spaces and resources to deliver it to a high standard".

Ofsted has previously said it has no rule banning schools with three-year GCSEs from being 'outstanding'.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

'No protectionism' says school on course to deliver T-levels

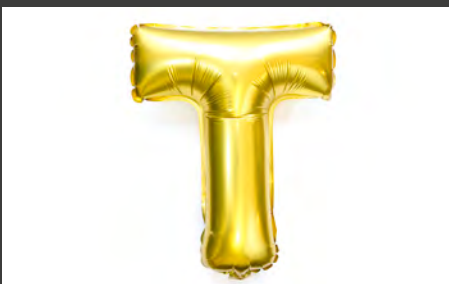
A school among the first to deliver new T-level qualifications has rejected claims of "protectionism" among other schools, after a damning report raised questions about the readiness of the programme.

Sixteen schools and sixth forms are among the 50 providers due to deliver three so-called "pathways" from September 2020 involving courses in design, surveying and planning for the construction industry, software application development for the digital industry, and education for the education and childcare industry.

T-levels are designed to have "parity of esteem" with A-levels and will give young people the option of a vocational route from the age of 16.

A report by the National Foundation for Educational Research, based on testimony from six providers, found that although they were "generally positive about meeting their student recruitment targets", there were concerns regarding "school protectionism".

"Some providers commented that because of this they would struggle to promote T-levels in



schools with sixth forms," the report said.

Some providers also believe potential students could be put off by a requirement that they clock up 600 minimum guided learning hours on top of a 315-hour minimum industry placement.

But Ruth Coyle, director of learning and sixth form at La Retraite RC Girls School in south west London, said: "I haven't had any problems with getting into other schools to talk about T-levels."

The school, which will deliver the T-levels in digital, childcare and education and a level 2 transition programme from September, has received government funding for a capital build to house new students.

Coyle added that industry places were being trialled this year and links had already been established with local businesses.

"So I don't really have any worries. We'll be ready for September. We've got students already enrolled on the course. We're going to be interviewing them in the new year. We're good to go."

It is not the first time education providers have criticised schools for failing to promote alternative routes.

The Baker Clause, a piece of legislation introduced last year, was designed specifically to force schools to allow other education providers in to speak to their pupils.

Its architect, the former education secretary Lord Baker, has accused schools of failing to promote university technical colleges.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the number of "serious concerns" about T-levels should be "ringing alarm bells in Whitehall", particularly as the first students are due to embark on the courses in just nine months' time.

News

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Aldridge becomes patron of his own academy trust

JAMES CARR @JAMESCARR_93

The millionaire businessman behind Aldridge Education academy trust has been named as its patron after relinquishing his role as trustee earlier this year.

Sir Rod Aldridge said he is "delighted" to have taken on the honorary role following his resignation in September.

While the role of patron is common in the charity sector - to raise the profile and mission of an organisation - it is much rarer among academy trusts.

The trust said Aldridge will continue to visit their schools in his new role to give speeches and use his experience as an employer to help pupils at a time "when the gap between the richest and poorest is widening".

But he's not the only academy trust patron.

For instance, Olympic ice dance heroes Torville and Dean were made patrons of the LEAD Academy Trust in 2015.

A press release issued at the time from the pair said they wanted to support the trust "giving young people high aspirations", adding: "We hope our own achievements can provide even more motivation to the children".

When asked for comment, the trust said the pair are no longer patrons - but would not provide any further details.

Elsewhere, Feversham Education Trust appointed former education secretary and Labour MP Ruth Kelly as patron last year.

The trust said its aim is to "work on areas of social and economic deprivation and improve the social mobility of young people,



Jayne Torville and Christopher Dean

something which Ruth is also very well known for championing.

"Ruth has helped us to share best practice across the sector by speaking about the work the trust does in deprived communities."

However, the decision to use a patron doesn't come without its risks.

Prince Andrew recently relinquished all 230 of his patronages following a car-crash BBC Newsnight interview regarding his relationship with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

They included 33 in the education sector, such as the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, which promotes university technical colleges, and the Enterprise Education Trust, which helps youngsters develop employability skills.

He was also patron and president of The Wellington Academy, a state school

in Wiltshire sponsored by Wellington College.

Prior to the Prince's announcement that he would be withdrawing from public duties, Schools Week approached all the education charities he was associated with to see if they would be standing by him.

The majority - including Wellington Academy - declined to comment.

However the Peter Jones Foundation, which partners with schools to help pupils run businesses, said the Duke had "fully supported the work of the charity. Regarding the allegations, the Palace has issued an emphatic denial and we have nothing further to add to this statement".

Leora Cruddas, chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said the role helps recognise those with a "long service to a charitable organisation and it is a reflection of the contribution they have made".

Education Uncovered previously reported Aldridge has pumped over £12 million into the schools since 2006 - the highest donations by a private academy sponsor to schools.

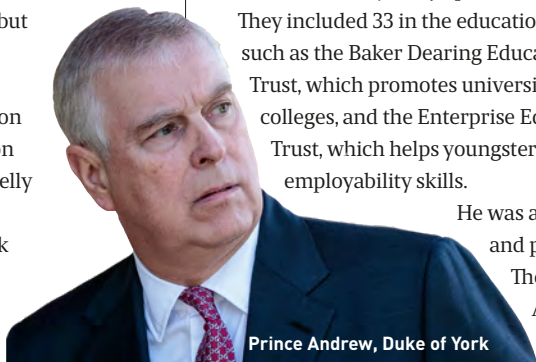
A Schools Week investigation in 2016 found nearly £20 million in charitable donations had been handed to just over 12 academy trusts by their multi-millionaire founders.

Sir Rod Aldridge founded the Aldridge Foundation in 2006. Under the Aldridge academy trust, it now runs 11 schools and colleges.

Aldridge made his fortune after founding outsourcing giant Capita in 1984 and is now worth in excess of £100 million.

On his new role, he added: "I believe passionately that all young people have a right to a good education. One that gives them both qualifications and the enterprising skills and entrepreneurial mindset to thrive."

He will continue to remain a member of the trust as well as a governor at Kensington Aldridge Academy.



Prince Andrew, Duke of York

Roach to succeed Keates at NASUWT

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Dr Patrick Roach will be the next general secretary of the NASUWT teaching union.

The current deputy general secretary, who was the union executive's candidate for the role, will succeed his current boss Chris Keates.

"There is no job more important in our world today than teaching and I will be proud to lead the union that is the representative voice of

teachers across the UK, the Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Gibraltar," Roach said.

His appointment comes after Paul Nesbitt failed to get enough nominations to stand against Roach in a leadership context.

Nesbitt, the union's national executive member for the West Midlands, ran on a platform calling for control of the organisation to be handed back to its

members.

In an email to union officials seen by Schools Week, NASUWT president Dave Kitchen said Nesbitt had received 14 nominations from local associations - 11 short of the 25 required to stand.

It means Roach was elected by default.

He will take up the role next year, although NASUWT is yet to confirm the exact date.

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Time for government to write a new story

The nation has spoken and they have chosen a Conservative government.

So, what does this mean for schools? There are a few things we can say with certainty.

Ofsted will be beefed up. Inspections will be lengthened from two to three days. No-notice Ofsteds will be trialled in schools.

These are big changes that have had, in the politest terms, a mixed reception from the sector. They are also a stark contrast to what the other parties offered (both Labour and the Lib Dems pledged to scrap the inspectorate).

Schools will get extra funding, too. But – and this is important – it will only just about replace the money that the Conservative government has squeezed out of budgets over the past few years.

It's also less than was promised by both the other main parties.

Teacher salaries will rise to £30,000 – a welcome development that may aid recruitment (although it won't kick in until 2022).

But what about retention? How do we hold on to the teachers who are leaving in their droves?

Then there are the ambiguous pledges.

The Johnson government has used tough

rhetoric around backing heads on discipline.

But there's little on detail of how it will do this. The number of exclusions is rising with campaigners concerned about the impact on those pupils.

A major review into exclusions found that the alternative provision sector needs improving. But there was little in the manifesto about doing this.

The Conservatives will also “create more good schools”. But how? And where?

The country may have a clearer direction of travel, but there are still lots of questions about how this will translate into schools policy.

School leaders will welcome clarity going into 2020.

And a word on 2019. Two of our end-of-year review contributors described 2019 in terms of a Dickensian world. It's a damning indictment of a hard year for the sector.

But as contributing editor Laura McInerney points out (page 19), in Dickens the misery and grief at least lead somewhere heart-warming.

“Politics is the art of the possible,” she writes. “Let's hope 2020 feels like that.”

That's something we can all get behind.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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2019 Politics review



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Schools have been visited by the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future this year, writes Laura McInerney. It's about time they had their happy ending

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Oh, who are we kidding? This year has been the political pits and there's no pretending otherwise. No money, no new ideas, and at the time of writing, no idea how it will all turn out. "If you're in hell, keep going" has become a useless adage. Life is purgatory these days.

Still, if you read the Department for Education newsreel, then 2019 had loads of reasons for cheer. According to the government's latest mental health survey, children are "happy with their lives", and their most recent workforce survey indicates that workload has dropped by five hours a week. And there are now more children than ever in good or outstanding schools, according to every ministerial speech this year.

Of course, what these headlines neglect to mention is that a quarter of teenage girls have an emotional disorder; teacher recruitment figures have been missed for the seventh year running, including in primary schools; and the statistics authority has repeatedly begged ministers not to use the "more children in good schools" line because it is misleading. 2019: a good year for headlines, and a lousy one for truth.

A personal highlight of the year was sitting opposite academies minister Lord Agnew at the Festival of Education to grill him on the Schools Week exclusive investigation into "cost cutter" reports – ie, the dossiers put together by his team of



LAURA MCINERNEY

Co-Founder of TeacherTapp, former editor of *Schools Week*

No money, no ideas – it's pure purgatory

school resource management advisers (SMRAs) who find savings for schools. Their recommendations included cutting lunch portions and replacing experienced teachers with younger, cheaper ones.

Did Agnew really believe scrimping on a few chips would resolve school funding issues? The Lord responded

A month later, the ghosts of education past returned to political life, when Dominic Cummings and Michael Gove took top positions in the team of new prime minister, Boris Johnson. The education secretary also changed, from Damian Hinds to Gavin Williamson, the political equivalent of swapping the actress playing Queen Elizabeth in

“ A good year for headlines, and a lousy one for truth

that he was "not a Dickensian character" and that the schools in question really were wasting cash.

Why would anyone think him Dickensian though? What possible connection could Lord Agnew – a billionaire philanthropist, who failed at his fancy boarding school before making a fortune outsourcing low-paid jobs from England to India, then returning to become a Conservative peer and telling children their food portions are too large – have with Dickens characters?

The Crown; their faces look different, but nothing much else has changed. Insipid and uninspiring seems to be the new default mode for Conservative education secretaries.

And then, it was election time! Arriving with the same speed and surprise that nativities catch out Year 1 teachers, we were all suddenly thrown into a blitz of education debate. Except, that's about as true as those dodgy outstanding school stats. Our Teacher Tapp poll of 6,000 teachers found that a majority felt Brexit was



a more critical voting issue than education, and once every party pledged "some more money" for schools, the whole thing mostly dropped off the election radar.

Nevertheless, Angela Rayner, Labour's shadow education secretary, was undeterred from throwing out radical ideas – scrap Ofsted, give everyone free breakfast, max class sizes of 30 (including secondary schools), free university for all, bring back the education maintenance allowance, and tax private schools. Their practicality is to be sniffed at, but at least there's heart in these ideas. The Conservatives, on the other hand, promised £4k per primary pupil (less than half of what a university student costs). That's about it.

Which brings us to something missing in 2019. The enduring appeal of Dickens is that, in the end, the misery and grief at least lead somewhere heart-warming. In 2020, whoever wins the election would do well to pick a team that has, above all else, passion, empathy and a belief that money does more than get wasted in schools. Politics is the art of the possible. Let's hope 2020 feels like that.

2019 Secondary review



DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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The dictionary of secondary schooling has seen a few new additions in 2019. Helena Marsh catalogues them, and makes some early suggestions for the 2020 edition



HELENA MARSH

Executive principal of Linton Village College and Chilford Hundred Education Trust

December marks the final instalment of updates to the Oxford English Dictionary for 2019. While terms such as “omnishambles” and “fake news” have achieved “headword” status this year, there have been plentiful additions to the educational lexicon.

A move away from acronyms to clickbait catchphrases reflects the increasingly polarised presentation of complex challenges in the sector.

The highlights from the year do read like a somewhat bleak, Dickensian depiction of childhood. However, as with Dickens’ stories, there’s a glint of optimism for the future.

Inclusion: are there no prisons?

The terms “flattening the grass” and “off-rolling” have become commonplace in school leadership vernacular, symbolic of practices that seek to quash undesirable students or eliminate outliers from performance tables. The inconsistent treatment of schools indulging in seemingly immoral behaviours has created a confused landscape of double standards.

Meanwhile, binary debates pitching “trauma-informed” against “zero-tolerance” approaches and those seeking to “ban the booths” against “warm-strict” methods have resulted in a spectrum of dichotomous soap boxes.

“County Lines” is a term that has become ubiquitous and pernicious, while the terms “childhood poverty” and “mental health crisis” have also

Great expectations or bleak house?

become commonplace. The risks posed to young people’s health and wellbeing have placed significant pressures on schools already buckling from increasing demands against a backdrop of diminishing and oversubscribed external services.

However, professional stylistic divisions persist, with the case for holistic, discovery and child-led learning being branded as “edutainment” by more traditionalist factions.

“ The highlights from the year read like a Dickensian depiction of childhood

Curriculum: great expectations

A barrage of on-trend vocabulary has accompanied the introduction of the new Ofsted inspection framework. The words “intent”, “implementation” and “impact” have assumed a certain gravitas, while “deep dive” has quickly developed its own verb status. Schools have rushed to prove their “knowledge-rich” curricula, and schemes of work have been replaced by “schema”.

“Progress” and “pedagogy” have taken a back-seat in 2019, being replaced with an appreciation of “direct instruction” and “cognitive load” as particular types of in vogue “evidence-informed” practice. The names of leading thinkers, including “Hirsch” and “Rosenshine”, have become bywords for academic challenge.

Resources: Please, sir, can I have some more?

Schools have continued to struggle financially as promises of “fairer funding have yet to materialise. “Worth Less?” has become established as the unifying and “relentlessly reasonable” slogan of head teachers and their school communities to challenge insufficient resources.

Euphemistic business terms such as “restructure” and “change management” have become familiar as schools have been forced to cut their ever-shrinking cloths to make budgets balance.

The “recruitment and retention crisis” has deepened further, with another year of failed teacher training targets and deserting teachers leaving staffrooms depleted, adversely affecting workload and morale.

Hope and agency: consider nothing impossible

Collins’ dictionary word of 2019, “climate strike”, signals a fundamental concern for the health and future for our young people. Meanwhile, another contender for the top spot, “hopepunk” – a movement that celebrates the pursuit of positive aims in the face of adversity – aptly sums up the requisite mood in school staffrooms as we roar into the 2020s.

Running a truly inclusive school with high standards and excellent outcomes on a shoestring budget can feel like an impossible challenge. Nevertheless, school leaders will continue to work to secure the necessary conditions for their students and staff to flourish.

“Change begets change. Nothing propagates so fast.”

So, as 2019 and this government come to a close, I offer three early entries for 2020’s educational dictionary.

Intelligent accountability: the replacement of crude inspection judgments and league tables with humane measures that recognise and celebrate different contextual challenges.

Genuine investment: as opposed to “spending”, when referring to government expenditure into schools, reflecting the need for planned, long-term budgeting (and the costs of recommendations from policies such as the Early Careers Framework and the Timpson review).

Sustainable schools: government non-interference, or better yet, policy based on cross-party consensus to allow schools to embed improvements.

2019 Primary review



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

Primaries, their teachers and pupils face an unprecedented crisis if things don't change in 2020, says Robert Campbell. And the most vulnerable will pay first and hardest

I spent five months of this year as the interim head of a maintained primary school that had been judged "requires improvement" the previous year. This school, like so many others, is a perfect case to offer a "fuzzy generalisation" (Bassey, 1995) about the state of the nation's primary schools at the end of 2019.

Primary schools are the beating hearts of their communities, reflecting the mood and make-up of their locales. I was aware of that and it sounds a bit clichéd when you express it in this way, but I witnessed it so palpably during the time there.

While much of it was tough and the school was facing challenges, so much of the work was deeply uplifting and positive. Here, in order of importance for the new government and the new year, are my top five fuzzy generalisations from that experience.

First, budgets are tight and getting tighter. And while this affects all schools, it disproportionately affects smaller ones, which are especially critical to the communities and children they serve. The common talk amongst primary heads in Cambridgeshire throughout the year has been led by two questions: "How much are you cutting?" and "How many staff are you losing?". This financial situation is applying a ligature around schools.

Second, and as a consequence, forced staffing reductions are further eroding schools' ability to act. Parents rightly expect a world-class education, but the service is increasingly managing with



ROBERT CAMPBELL

Interim Head, Burwell Village College Primary School, and CEO, Morris Education Trust

As 2020 dawns, primaries face a perfect storm

an inadequate budget. Cambridgeshire receives about £2,700 per pupil to educate its younger children. Parents would pay £15,000 a year for one of the local independent schools, yet they often expect state schools to offer the same.

assessments, new Ofsted framework. It's having a hugely detrimental effect on teachers and teaching assistants alike. Three (experienced) teachers left in the summer, having decided not to continue working in education because of the

“ We cannot afford this degradation of our national capital to continue on any level

Third, there is a perfect storm affecting primary teachers' wellbeing and retention. Primaries sweat the small stuff. Every day. And in a world of change and challenge, they have even more to sweat about: new(ish) KS2 tests, year 4 multiplication, KSI

rising pressures. We cannot afford this degradation of our national capital to continue on any level – human, material, financial, social, intellectual or cultural.

Fourth, primaries sweat the big stuff too. Primary colleagues worry for England. They worry because they care

so much – about every aspect of a child's life – and that leads them to construct incredibly rich pictures of the children they teach. The joke goes that if there was nothing to worry about, they'd worry about that.

Unfortunately, with rising needs affecting children and families, and diminishing additional support from local authorities, there is plenty to worry about. Result? Increased workload, pressure and stress.

Fifth, in spite of it all, primaries are places of hope. Any early years setting can put a smile on even the grumpiest of people. They are wonderfully happy places because they provide education for young people in the prime of childhood.

So my hope for primary education for 2020?

If this nation is serious about raising expectations, diminishing disadvantage and building hope for all, it needs to double its investment in early years and primary schools – and the earlier the intervention, the better. Forty per cent of the education gap is in place by the age of five. We've heard proposals for new or expanded grammar schools, and proposals for a greater focus on technical education. The first is simply too little, and the latter is simply too late.

The very idea that schools should compete with each other for funding is highly problematic. But if it has to be a choice between which children to invest in, then our long-term interests are best-served by investing our money in our youngest. They are the future and we are at serious risk of harming for over our nation's health and happiness if we fail to act now.



2019 SEND review



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

This year, the funding crisis affecting children with SEND and their families finally got the political attention it needs. Julie McCulloch explains how it came about, and what needs to happen next

The lack of adequate financial support for children with SEND has been at the sharpest end of the school funding crisis for years now, but 2019 saw the publication of two comprehensive, authoritative reports that highlight the extent to which some of the most vulnerable young people in our society are being systematically short-changed.

The first report came from the House of Commons education select committee. Released in July, it raised “deep concerns around long-term strategic planning and financial prudence regarding high-needs funding.” Expert witnesses told the committee that funding levels for children and young people with SEND were unsustainable, warning that “unless we can address the issues about SEND funding, the whole system will implode.”

Hot on the education committee’s heels, in September the National Audit Office (NAO) published a similarly damning report on the support currently provided for pupils with SEND in England. The report concluded that, while some pupils with SEND are receiving high-quality support that meets their needs, many others are not. The complex system for supporting pupils with SEND is not financially sustainable, with many local authorities finding it impossible to live within their high-needs budgets and meet demand, the NAO concluded.



JULIE MCCULLOCH

Director of Policy, Association of School and College Leaders

The SEND funding crisis can’t be hidden any longer

The reasons why the school and college funding crisis is impacting so severely on pupils with SEND are myriad and complex. One of the medical miracles of our age is that more children who were born prematurely, and with disabilities, live longer than previously. This in turn means the number of young people with significant additional

needs is growing. And a vicious circle is created by parents who, losing faith in mainstream schools to provide the support their children need, instead seek places in more expensive specialised SEND provision.

Late in the day, 2019 became an election year, but not a moment too soon for those hoping and

“ The complex system for supporting pupils with SEND is not sustainable

needs is growing.

In addition, new rights for parents to request particular services for their children, introduced in 2014, have understandably led to increased parental expectations, which the system is failing to deliver. An over-focus on securing an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) as the “golden ticket” to SEND support has, perversely, made it more difficult for schools to offer and fund interventions that might help struggling children both earlier and

campaigning for change. In their manifestos and promises, all three major parties committed to increasing school funding, with SEND funding meriting specific mentions.

The Conservative Party pledged to increase the annual schools budget by £7.1bn by 2022/23, with £780 million earmarked to support children with SEND next year. Labour said it would increase the schools budget by £10.5bn over the same period, and would “provide



the necessary funding for children with SEND”. The Liberal Democrats promised to “reverse cuts to school funding”, provide an “emergency cash injection”, and “allocate additional cash to local authorities to halve the amount that schools pay towards the cost of a child’s Education Health and Care Plan”.

These commitments are significant and welcome. In order to make a real difference to the lives and prospects of children with SEND, though, the new government must go further.

It must undertake a proper, evidence-based analysis of the real cost of supporting pupils with SEND – and commit to providing the money needed, on a long-term basis, to enable schools and colleges to provide that support.

It must address the issues which make it harder for schools to put in place measures to support children early, rather than relying on the costly and time-consuming EHCP process.

And it must undertake a review of the use of independent provision for children with SEND, to ensure decisions on such placements are taken fairly, consistently and strategically around the country.

If 2019 was the year in which funding for children with SEND received the attention it deserves, let’s make 2020 the year in which we actually do something about it.

2019 Governance review



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

Education has gone as far back to basics as it possibly can, writes Martin Matthews. If only politicians found ABC as easy as 123



MARTIN MATTHEWS
National leader of governance



know that unless we pay them fairly we won't get the staff our children deserve.

After all, 2019 is also the year the government missed its recruitment targets for the seventh year in a row, and has had to publish a recruitment and retention strategy in the hopes of stemming the tide of teachers leaving the profession.

But perhaps the most important development in education this year has been that education has stayed in the electorate's top five concerns for the general election, which hasn't happened in 20 years.

Whatever the outcome, education should get more money, but that won't be enough. We need a national conversation to reset expectations, and we need a sustainable, reliable funding settlement that allows schools to effectively plan for the future. At the very least, the near future.

Schools have to be better resourced than a settlement that leaves them hoping something turns up. Having had a reasonably benign year in terms of reform, the fact is that we can't afford another. But 2020's politicians will hopefully be ready to move on from their ABCs to their 123s.

If one phrase could sum up this year's education policy, it would be "more heat than light". The previous year's cut-and-thrust of policy announcements evaporated like a will-o'-the-wisp, leaving governors with the freedom to focus on their priorities, but little power to act.

Yes, A is for apathy, which has characterised much of 2019.

Contrasting starkly with previous incumbents, we have had two secretaries of state (so far) this year, and neither seems to have been overly concerned about leaving any kind of legacy. Perhaps that's not wholly fair to Damian Hinds, who clearly cared about character education, or to Gavin Williamson, who set his aims on the college sector. But both have seen their agendas swallowed up. For more on that, see B, below.

Previously cherished policies have not simply been put on the back-burner, they have cooled and been stowed away in the deep freeze. The education system has been bogged down by an education politics in a kind of torpor not seen in years. This hasn't been altogether a bad thing. It has enabled schools to take a breath and to focus on their work of educating children, rather than playing catch-up with week-in-week-out reform.

While reform is necessary, this apathy has been a refreshing change and, no matter who wins, I suspect we will look back on this aspect of

We haven't seen this kind of torpor for years

2019 in rueful hindsight after the election.

Why the apathy? B means Brexit, of course.

Politicians and the media worked themselves into a frenzy in readiness for 29 March. And again for 31 October. This is the year that the Brexitnado finally sucked in all the staff, resources and time from across government, making the day-to-day governance of our nation almost glacial.

buses haven't been so prominent in 2019. Funding promises have, and for good reason: Cash. Irrespective of status or sector, not one school has enough of it. If the last few years have seen budgets look like satellites falling out of orbit, 2019 is the year they burned up on re-entry, or crash-landed.

I've been in governorship long enough to remember this happening in the 1990s. First went stuff, and then staff. Yet we're even beyond that

“ Irrespective of status or sector, not one school has enough cash

The result is that what once were straightforward decisions now take an absolute age. Schools choosing to academise have seen the average time double, and it looks like we will have to get used to this new pace of things. An impact to look out for will be how many schools now manage to move out of special measures before an academy order is even issued.

On the plus side, election battle

now, and everyone (apart from Lord Agnew, it seems) acknowledges that without more money, things will have to change.

The squeeze on funding has led to the usual slew of myths about pay awards: "primary schools can only have 1 UPS teacher", "headteachers and deputies can only get a pay increase every other year", and other such dubious advice. But governors

2019 Business review



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

Despite the backdrop of continued political uncertainty and a government in relative paralysis, 2019 has been an exciting year for the school business leadership profession, writes Stephen Morales

SBL has long campaigned to give school business professionals (SBPs) a system leadership role where their unique skills, qualifications and experiences are recognised and embraced by the sector. This year was a success in that regard with the launch of the school resource management adviser (SRMA) initiative.

While there has been some controversy, so far there have been over 300 successful SRMA deployments. This is also a success for sector-led school improvement, offering schools access to the niche expertise of the SBL community, which could lead to something comparable to national leaders of education.

Along with ISBL Fellows like Angela Ogden, director of business services at St Damian's RC Science College – who won School Business Leader of the Year at the inaugural National Schools Awards in November – the sector now has a pool of talented business leaders ready and able to help vulnerable schools and trusts improve their financial planning and secure their future sustainability.

ISBL has been at the vanguard of the concept of joined-up leadership where the pillars of business, governance and pedagogy work in an inclusive and integrated way. I spent much of 2019 visiting schools of every phase and type, and it has been incredibly encouraging to see



STEPHEN MORALES

Stephen Morales, Chief executive, Institute of School Business Leadership

School business leaders are transforming schools and the system

that joined-up approach to school leadership taking root in so many schools.

At Alfreton Nursery School, which serves a deprived community in Derbyshire, I met Katie Cresswell, who works seamlessly with her headteacher and deputy head, creating a unique learning environment. Incredibly, this team

life chances of children.

The continuing political uncertainty has made longer-term planning very difficult for SBPs and their SLT colleagues. A government in paralysis means very little change, and the SBL community is united in saying that change is needed in the underlying school financing arrangements. Conversely, the

“ The sector now has a pool of talented business leaders ready to help vulnerable schools

has found time to learn and share practice beyond their own setting, conducting research in Scandinavia, working closely with the local teaching school and writing extensively on the work they've done. There is no doubt that they are important system leaders.

I also visited two urban schools serving diverse communities where knife crime and high levels of deprivation present huge challenges. Despite these challenges and a significant intake of SEND pupils, SBPs in these settings are doing inspirational work to transform the

turbulence resulting from a new government and the anxiety of accelerated reform loom large.

Manifesto promises have set an expectation that more money will flow into the system and the hope that a cliff edge can now be avoided, but there remains scepticism about how promises will materialise.

As the year comes to an end, the prospect of some movement on funding arrangements and light at the end of the tunnel in terms of a hard formula are reasons to feel optimistic.

We should not underestimate the

role SBPs are playing in ongoing technical discussions in a number of policy areas. This year, they have helped bring about progress on a more effective financial reporting and assurance regime, assisting officials with developments on improved automation, the removal of duplication, and the flow of information between schools and government agencies.

The idea that Ofsted may soon extend their remit to include a judgement on financial health has raised some eyebrows, and the concern amongst SBLs is the competency and ability of existing inspectors to have an informed opinion in technical areas for which they are not trained. Of course, this could present a new opportunity for SBPs themselves to perform a role alongside pedagogical HMIs.

Across the system, the impact of policy on school finances remains a mixed picture – local authorities have taken a hammering, and services once readily available to schools are no longer there. However, some trusts are benefiting from carefully considered reorganisation and enjoying significant improvements in the deployment and optimisation of resources, ultimately better serving a whole community of learners rather than isolated high-performing schools.

The next few days will determine the policy trajectory for the year ahead, and perhaps longer. School business leaders will do what they always do – roll their sleeves up and confront the challenges head on.

Books for Christmas!

Stuck for a present for a teacher? Try our 'nerdy books for Christmas' list.

For policy nerds

The Educated Guess

By Warwick Sharp
Publisher: Self-published

The Educated Guess is a gem of a book written by someone at the heart of the Department for Education (Sharp was the former principal private secretary to education secretary Damian Hinds).

The book shines a light into the murky world of cognitive bias and challenges some commonly held education myths to help people make better decisions in education.



For curriculum leaders

Curriculum: Athena Versus the Machine

By Martin Robinson
Publisher: Crown House

Following on from the success of *Trivium*, Robinson's new tome makes the case for curriculum to be rooted in the pursuit of wisdom – and explores how schools can achieve this.

But if wisdom is to win the day, it must slay the data-driven, dehumanising "machine thinking". A clash of titans worthy of our Marvel cinematic age.



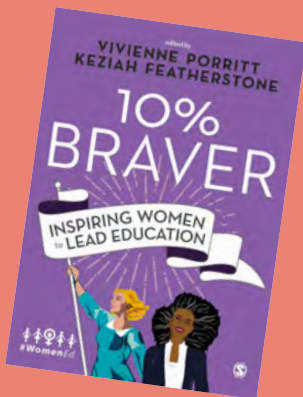
For women in education

10% Braver: Inspiring Women to Lead Education

By Vivienne Porritt and Keziah Featherstone
Publisher: Sage Publishing

Boasting chapters from the sector's best and brightest female leaders, the book is a collective call to arms for all women in education.

Female leaders in education are under-represented – and that needs to change. What would you do to make a change today if you were 10 per cent braver?



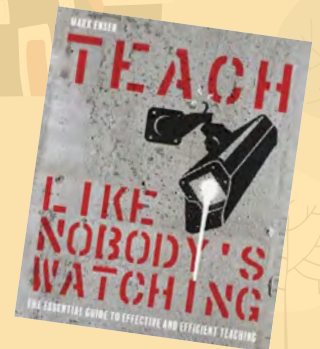
For classroom teachers

Teach Like Nobody's Watching

By Mark Enser
Publisher: Crown House

Thought-provoking and refreshing, Enser's book unpicks the hidden complexities of teachers doing the right thing in the classroom for the students in front of them.

He advocates a time-efficient approach to teaching that can reduce workload and increase pupil engagement. The book is suitable for teachers in both primary and secondary.



Books for Christmas!

For new teachers

Making it as a Teacher

By Victoria Hewett

Publisher: Routledge



The book provides detailed ideas about how to make the job manageable, satisfying and productive. Hewett uses her own story of how she went from the verge of quitting to falling in love with the profession again.

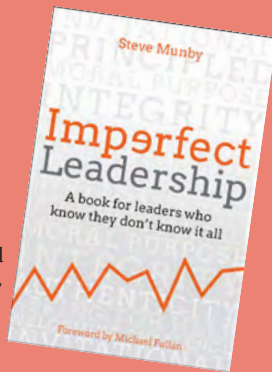
A hopeful and uplifting work for teaching newbies who feel like they are sinking.

For school leaders

Imperfect Leadership

By Steve Munby

Publisher: Crown House



Forget superheads; Munby's well-received book argues no leader is perfect – and nor should they try to be.

The book, centred around Munby's annual keynote speeches made while chief executive of the National College for School Leadership, charts the changes in the national education landscape alongside his own leadership journey.

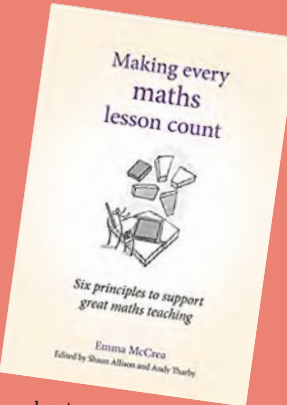
A book for leaders who know they don't know it all.

For maths teachers

Making Every Maths Lesson Count

By Emma McCrea

Publisher: Crown House



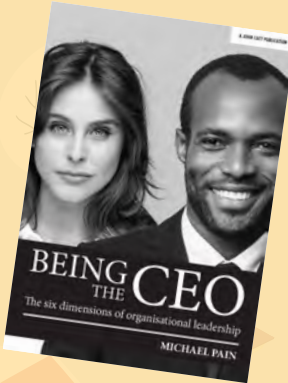
Packed full of practical ideas and examples, this book offers concise advice on contemporary maths teaching. Perfect for teachers looking to move beyond the trial and error stage and get their hands-on evidence-informed tips on what works (and what doesn't).

For academy chiefs

Being the CEO: the Six Dimensions of Organisational Leadership

By Michael Pain

Publisher: John Catt



Is there a secret formula to being a successful academy leader? Maybe. Pain explores the six key areas he believes make a good boss, from being able to translate your vision into a narrative and being the chief talent officer.

Perfect for a new leader who wants to avoid the pitfalls and bear traps of leadership.

Research

The Centre for Education and Youth reviews the evidence on a school-related theme. Contact CFEY on Twitter @TheCFEY if you have a topic you would like it to cover

Do schools understand what it's like to be poor at Christmas?

Loic Menzies, Centre for Education and Youth

A recent House of Commons briefing paper suggests that on current trends, by 2021/22, the share of children in relative low income after housing costs will be at its highest for as far back as there is consistent data (the 1960s).

This is an increasingly common challenge for schools, and Christmas can make things even harder for poorer pupils. When home-life is stressful, being holed up together for two weeks surrounded by talk of presents can be unbearable. So what does the research say about how to "poverty-proof" the school day?

In 2013/14, Children North East piloted a research-based initiative that involved an audit of pupils' experiences of poverty through pupil focus groups, as well as questionnaires for staff, governors and parents. The audit led to an action plan highlighting school practices that stigmatise poorer pupils.

Laura Mazzoli Smith and Liz Todd's recent evaluation of the programme's findings showed that teachers were often surprised by pupils' reports of stigmatisation. They therefore embarked on a process of abductive reasoning – or "inference to the best available hypothesis" – to explain their findings.

The first hypothesis Mazzoli Smith and Todd examine is a popular view in sociology, according to which teachers buy into "deficit-based" ideas about a "culture of poverty". For example, teachers might be influenced by characterisations of poor families as "benefit scroungers", making them unsympathetic to pupils' complex battles with shame, particularly when these play out in apparently illogical responses, such as buying expensive trainers.

The researchers dismiss this first hypothesis on the grounds that the



teachers in their study were shocked and evidently empathetic in response to the audits.

Turning to other sources for alternative explanations, the authors conclude that prioritising "scientific" characterisations of poverty, including "objective indices of material deprivation", such as pupil premium eligibility, excludes other "forms of knowledge". In other words, teachers' focus on hard metrics blinkers them to pupils' personal experiences of poverty.

Mazzoli Smith and Todd point out that fear of being "humiliated or shamed" can lead pupils to hide their poverty. This involves a stressful process of "impression management", such as refusing to disclose their circumstances; avoiding telling their parents about school trips they think will be unaffordable; or bullying pupils in even tougher circumstances. The authors believe these complex experiences and behaviour

patterns have become invisible to teachers

and that this might explain teachers' shock when presented with audit findings.

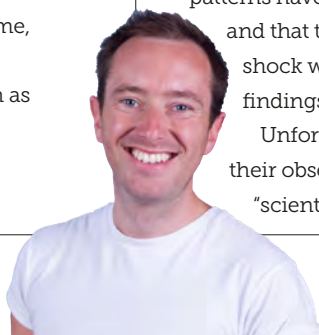
Unfortunately, the authors use their observations to argue that "scientific" information on poverty

(like pupil premium eligibility) are necessarily problematic, rather than simply in need of being complemented by a more human lens. They therefore segue into a critique of "performativity". Abductive reasoning is problematic in that way. While it purports to offer a third type of logical reasoning (alongside inductive and deductive forms), questions remain about whether it serves to generate or to justify hypotheses.

Nevertheless, the research is refreshingly insightful, given that it is rooted in a practical, school-based programme which tackles one of the big issues of our time.

As executive head of Aspire Schools (a group of PRUs in Buckinghamshire), Debra Rutley is keenly aware that Christmas can be "hugely traumatic" for many of her pupils. "We try to make sure the focus at Christmas is on the human dimension," she explains. Yet she is keen to avoid creating a "fun-free zone".

It is a difficult balance to achieve, but as schools gear up for the season of goodwill, Mazzoli Smith and Todd's article shows that fear of being seen as a Scrooge should not stop us from reshaping routines and practices that can make school life tougher for poorer pupils.



Reviews



Jon Hutchinson, assistant head, Reach Academy Feltham and visiting fellow, Ambition Institute

@JON_HUTCHINSON_

(don't) Forget About It: activating background knowledge with retrieval practice in ELA

@MsJasmineMN

Retrieval practice is in danger of falling off the edufad conveyer belt, mandated through policy without meaningful consideration of how it can be implemented intentionally. Thank goodness that, in this blogpost, US teacher Jasmine Lane gets stuck into the nuance of the shiny new strategy within the context of teaching Macbeth. The depth of thought shows that "activating prior knowledge" will only get you so far; to truly transform learning requires a skilful teacher considering what, how and when pupils are retrieving knowledge, as well as how it is then integrated into "organised knowledge structures". Of particular utility is how Lane begins with the theory before giving concrete examples of identifying which knowledge items are crucial to answer specific questions comprehensively.

The Curriculum: what to cut?

@MaryMyatt

This is essential reading for any senior leadership team considering what they should – and shouldn't – be asking of their teachers. Whilst everyone is busy reviewing

TOP BLOGS of the week

their curriculum content, it is easy to forget some other aspects of schooling that have a significant impact on teachers and pupils. Mary Myatt identifies three main areas in this punchy blogpost: school feedback and marking policies, the use of data, and performance appraisal. Each of them carries the risk of generating huge amounts of workload and stress, with very little gain. There will be cheers as Myatt condemns common practices of the bad old days: "Carting truckloads of books home doesn't provide timely and helpful feedback." There is plenty of practical guidance for what we should be focusing on instead ("We need teachers talking together about the features of high-quality work and how to support all pupils to get there.")

Lead well – or die trying.

@OldPrimaryHead1

I have long admired Old Primary Head, and gained much from the wisdom of his writing, which is always characterised by integrity and a brutal honesty, often self-directed. This blogpost is no exception, and deals with how the current hilariously (not that hilarious) unrealistic demands on school leaders can negatively impact health. One insight from this piece challenges the prevalent narrative of short-term superheroes: "I keep saying that our longevity in our profession is the biggest measure of the success we have." People are

not superheroes, and pretending they are is folly. If we don't heed OPH's advice, we may well find ourselves sleepwalking into a headteacher crisis, just at the time when we need them most.

Cultural Capital: an exploration

@Penny_ten

Sometimes blogposts make you think, sometimes they make you laugh, and sometimes you just take out a notepad and learn. This piece on cultural capital is the latter, with Penny Rabiger providing a thoroughly comprehensive analysis of this slippery and often unexamined term. The design of British education as a kind of "sorting hat" is challenged, alongside traditional views of what constitutes "essential knowledge". The very terminology that we use to discuss culture is unpacked to reveal the biases underneath. If you want to inject cultural capital into the lifeblood of your school (and you should) this piece will take you beyond the superficial, bolt-on tick-box approach and towards something far richer and more meaningful for all.

Where is the evidence for reading comprehension strategies?

@solomon_teach

We end with a remarkable opportunity. The chance to win a million pounds.* How? Simply solve Solomon Kingsnorth's challenge. After taking a magnifying glass to the research in reading comprehension strategies, it's fair to say that Kingsnorth is less than satisfied. In this piece, he challenges the cherished belief that "comprehension skills" can be taught or developed independently of a particular text. This is more than an academic concern, since "the intense focus on reading comprehension strategies," he contends, "has completely distorted the teaching of reading and has minimised understanding of the greater role of background knowledge and vocabulary in reading comprehension". *there are a few caveats...

CLICK ON REVIEWS TO VIEW BLOGS +



Three-year GCSEs? No 'outstanding' for you...

Liam Collins

No preferred curriculum at all...apart from the imposition of a length of KS3...but apart from that...oh no wait I forgot the instance that schools enter all their children into the mythical "EBacc" ...thank goodness there is no preferred curriculum.

Stephen Drew, @StephenDrew72

IVC creates an incredibly rich curriculum experience for its totally comprehensive cohort of students. To say otherwise is ideological nonsense. The inspectors showed a lack of capacity to go beyond their narrow confines and consider the overall package of what IVC delivers.

Amy Kirkland

Bramhall high school has been told the same. Requires improvement despite being one of the highest performing schools in the area. A result purely based on their three-year GCSE. Ofsted basically proving themselves unfit for purpose again.

Lisa T, @TilesiLisa

I remember reading in the current inspection framework that schools will be judged on breadth and depth of curriculum at key stage 3. It may not be explicit, but if the curriculum at KS3 is reduced by a third, how can a school achieve the desired breadth?

'Confidential' Ofsted guidance for curriculum 'deep dives' leaked

Brian Lightman, @brianlightman

Difficult to understand why any training materials for inspectors would not be in the public domain unless the intention was to 'catch people out'.

The Only Family Blog, @theonlyfamilybl

I know of someone who did their training and shared everything with their school. It would be fair if training materials were public, then maybe we can all have a positive approach/experience when it happens rather than that anxious, sickening feeling!

Nic Masters, @NicMasters2

On my inspector training we had to sign a confidentiality

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Chris Malone, @CMoiraM

Life as a teacher – and candidate

All the best to them all in their campaigning, whatever party; we need more teachers in Parliament, in touch with the reality of the classroom.

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

agreement saying that the training documents were not to be shared and should not be duplicated etc. Common for consultants to book onto training and then 'drop out' before the final stage.

Blacklisted academy bosses were a one-off, says DfE

Mark Watson

OK, trying to apply a modicum of common sense to cut through the hysteria:

1. It was hardly secretive if the ESFA wrote directly to the individuals concerned "strongly discouraging from further involvement in schools". It's not like this would come as a surprise to them.
2. From both stories I'm struggling to see how this is blacklisting. Without having seen the paperwork, it sounds as though Agnew was asking to be informed if these individuals were found to be involved in schools. Doesn't sound like there was an instruction going out to prevent them, merely alerting the authorities to the fact. They could then take, or not take, appropriate action.

Paul Tarn

Seems eminently sensible given the back story that any minister reviewing the issues would want to be informed if those responsible were to be involved in the same public sector. Agree with Mark – can't see the issue, perhaps its more about the emotive language like blacklisting?

Labour would cap secondary class sizes at 30

Ian Jones, @schoolbarrister

Most secondary school intakes are already based on multiples of 30 – but many then have larger groups of more able students to allow smaller groups to support lower ability learners. Immediate result of secondary cap would be larger groups for needier students.

Mads Wheeler, @WheelerMads

It would be worth thinking about how all this is going to work for those subjects where we have massive teacher shortfalls too. [The recent] ITT stats showed subjects like physics still massively struggling on recruitment.

Graham Stuart, @grahamstuart

Teacher quality is far more important than class size. It's another way that a Corbyn government will cost more yet deliver worse outcomes for pupils. Particularly the poorest.



FRIDAY

TV hardman Ross Kemp (pictured) was in Newcastle North last week, hoping to knock teacher-turned-politician Mark Lechain out of the race to be the area's next MP.

The actor and filmmaker joined Labour's Cat McKinnell on the campaign trail to help her fight off the challenge from the former Parents and Teachers for Excellence and New Schools Network chief.

By the time you're reading this, we'll know whether the founder of Bedford Free School was successful in his quest to turn Newcastle blue and "Get Brexit Done".



MONDAY

Shadow education secretary Angela Rayner managed to remain pretty calm in the face of some tough questioning while on BBC *Question Time* today, appearing alongside Nigel Farage (who he?) and some other politicians.

Asked whether her party would "nationalise sausages", Rayner screwed up her face in disbelief, before responding, simply: "No."

It could've been worse, though. The presenter could have spent 10 minutes trying to ascertain whether she watches the Queen's speech. No wonder politicians are hiding in fridges to avoid questions.

TUESDAY

Getting some sleep in the bank ahead of Thursday.

WEDNESDAY

It's official. Patrick Roach will be the next general secretary of the NASUWT trade union.

Like every NASUWT leader since Nigel de Gruchy in 1990, Roach was elected unopposed after nobody managed to get the 25 branch nominations required to stand against him.

Union members and officials currently in dispute with Chris Keates, the current leader, are hoping that despite his allegiance to his current boss he will put the union back in the membership's hands.

But only time will tell. *Schools Week* is keeping its fingers crossed for an invite to the union's annual conference next year, following our enforced exile in 2019.

THURSDAY

Labour won the election!

Haha – obvs that's jokes. To be more precise, it won a mock election at Michaela Community School, taking 82 per cent of the vote against the Tories' 10 per cent.

Katharine Birbalsingh, the school's headteacher and a prominent Tory supporter, said the outcome was proof



Katharine Birbalsingh
@Miss_Snuffy

Michaela has voted!

Take note – People who think we brainwash kids and make them into robots.

They certainly aren't representative of my vote. 😊

that claims her super-strict school brainwashes pupils are a load of baloney.

"People who think we brainwash kids and make them into robots," she tweeted. "They certainly aren't representative of my vote."

Of course, *Week in Westminster* was filed before the polls closed on Friday, so we don't know whether this will be representative of the real polls.

But we're happy to take a wild stab in the dark and predict OF COURSE IT BLOODY WON'T BE.

Meanwhile, the latest update on education secretary Gavin Williamson's entertaining Instagram story was to bemoan that it "really is wet" out today.

Serves you right for supporting a chuffing election in the middle of winter, Gav.



That's Week in Westminster done for another year – see you all on the other side!



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Closing Date: 12 noon on 13th January 2020—Interviews on 22nd & 23rd January 2020.

Please send an application form and a letter of application, no more than two sides of A4, outlining how your skills and experience make you a suitable candidate for this post. An application pack is available on the school's website.

Further information:

Jo Cummings Athelstan Trust - Company Secretary admin@theathelstantrust.org
Malmesbury School, Corn Gastons, Malmesbury SN16 0DF

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