

SCHOOLS WEEK

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



'I will work with sector on school reopenings'



P4

'NES lacked an overarching message'



P11

'We're open to working with other unions'



P20

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'I've got nothing. No milk, no bread, no food, nothing'

- Devastation caused by free meal voucher delays revealed
- Teachers donate own food, heads working at 1am to resolve
- Government ignored firm's offer of help to boost capacity

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SCHOOLS WEEK

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Williamson: I will work with sector on reopenings

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

Gavin Williamson has promised he will "work with the sector" to decide how schools should reopen, but only "when the time is right".

The education secretary also promised the "difficulties that social distancing present" in schools will be "taken into account".

But he reiterated "no timetable has been set" for reopening.

Schools have been closed to all but the most vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers since March 20. Data released this week shows that attendance nationwide is about 1 per cent, with about 5 per cent of vulnerable pupils in school.

There has been speculation about how the government will handle the return of pupils.

Some newspaper reports have suggested the return could be staggered, with priority given to pupils in year 6 ahead of their transition to secondary school, and years 10 and 12 who are preparing for exams next year.

On Sunday Williamson played down reports in *The Sunday Times* that some pupils could return as early as May 11, and promised to give the sector "proper notice" once the government made its decision.

In an exclusive interview with *Schools Week*, Williamson sought to reassure



Gavin Williamson

headteachers that their voices would be heard.

"We have been very clear that no timetable has been set for the reopening of schools.

"We will work with the sector to decide how schools should reopen, when the time is right."

His comments came after unions warned that schools must not fully reopen until the government could guarantee the safety of staff and pupils.

Writing in *Schools Week*, Dr Mary Boustead, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said that the conditions were "not yet in place to even begin to envisage when schools might reopen".

Dr Patrick Roach, the general secretary of the NASUWT, called for schools to be deep-cleaned and for personal protective equipment (PPE) to be issued to staff before any restart.

Williamson told *Schools Week* it was "vital that teachers, parents and children can return to schools with confidence".

"We will, of course, take scientific advice on how best to ensure that. Schools will not reopen until the government's five tests are met."

The tests were set out last week by Dominic Raab, the first secretary of state (see boxout).

Williamson's intervention also comes after Katharine Birbalsingh, the founder and headteacher of the

Michaela community school in north London, warned that social distancing in schools was "impossible".

"What I don't want is for people to perpetuate the lie, and it is a lie, that social distancing [in schools] is possible. It just isn't," she told the *Today* programme.

Williamson said he appreciated "the difficulties that social distancing measures present in educational settings".

"That is a factor that will be taken into account when it comes to considering how schools should reopen."

THE 5 TESTS THAT MUST BE MET BEFORE SCHOOLS CAN REOPEN

- **Protecting the NHS's ability to cope**
- **A fall in daily death rates**
- **Reliable data showing decreasing infection rates**
- **Confidence in testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) capacity**
- **Confidence that changes to the government's approach won't risk a second peak of infections**

Staff showing COVID-19 symptoms to get free tests

School staff showing symptoms of coronavirus will be able to access free tests.

Matthew Hancock, the health secretary, announced yesterday that employers of essential workers can now book tests for any staff who need it, and that essential workers themselves can also book an appointment themselves.

The applies to people in essential workers' households too.

"It's all part of getting Britain back on her feet," Hancock said.

The Department of Health said "essential workers" eligible for testing include those working in education and childcare. This includes support and teaching staff, social workers and specialist education professionals.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, said this was a "welcome step" for "school staff on the front line in the national response to Coronavirus".

Once details are submitted via the new online portal, a text or email should be sent the same

day to book an appointment at one of more than 30 drive-through testing sites, or receive a home testing kit. The latter will be "initially limited" will the scheme is scaled up.

Test results from the drive-through sites will be sent out by test within 48 hours, and within 72 hours of collection of the home delivery tests.

The aim is that most people should not have to drive for more than 45 minutes to get to a regional testing site. A network of new mobile testing units is being set up to help meet this aim.

News

EXCLUSIVE



DfE will only commit to laptops coming 'within weeks'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government hopes its first batch of free laptops and tablets will reach pupils "within weeks", despite an initial delay to the application process.

Gavin Williamson told *Schools Week* the Department for Education was in the process of ordering devices and "working with suppliers to provide devices as soon as we can".

The education secretary announced on Sunday that the government would provide free devices to disadvantaged year 10 pupils, along with care leavers and children who have social workers.

It comes after headteachers voiced concerns that the lockdown would widen the disadvantage gap.

But the timing of the announcement – more than a month after schools closed – coupled with a delay to the launch of the application process for the devices has prompted fears they won't reach children in time to make a difference this academic year.

"We are ordering laptops and tablets for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and we are working with suppliers to provide devices as soon as we can," Williamson told *Schools Week*.

"We hope to get the first of those devices to children who need them within weeks."

Under the government's plans, local authorities and academy trusts will be able to submit business cases to the government via an online portal. Schools will then keep the devices once the lockdown ends.

A Teacher Tapp survey revealed just two per cent of teachers working in the poorest communities believe that all their pupils can access the internet at home.

Original guidance, published on Sunday, stated that schools would be able to submit online orders from Wednesday.

However, no facility for online orders had

been publicised by the time *Schools Week* went to press on Thursday night.

It comes as headteachers and school business leaders continue to grapple with problems with the DfE's national free school meals voucher service. They fear the laptops scheme could see similar issues if it is not managed properly.

Rebecca Long-Bailey, the shadow education secretary, said: "We've seen many families right across the country potentially going hungry because of administrative problems."

"The same can happen with the school laptops as well. If the government thinks that it's going to be difficult logistically to do it centrally, then they can assure schools that they'll make the funding available as quickly as possible and try and deliver this scheme locally."

Leaders have also expressed concerns that there won't be adequate technical support for families once the devices are in place, and questioned whether safeguarding software will be pre-installed.

Headteacher Vic Goddard, from Passmores Academy in Essex, said delays on details are causing frustration.

"We had parents turning up in reception the next day saying 'where's my laptop?'. If [Williamson] had proper conversations with somebody who's actually doing the job, they would have asked questions like how much data, how long it'll last, who's going to refresh it, who's going to go into the houses and set it up? The devil is in the detail."

The government will not say how many laptops it is ordering, or how much it is prepared to spend on technology.

The DfE has also not said how it will determine whether pupils are "disadvantaged", but will give councils and academy trusts "flexibility" to identify children who need help.

This flexibility makes it difficult to estimate how many pupils will be eligible. But if every year 10 pupil on free school meals, every child subject to a child protection plan and every care leaver was given a device, the number would be well over 150,000.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Oak's free hub attracts 700,000 hits

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government-backed Oak National Academy has clocked up 700,000 online visits in its first three days.

Schools Week revealed last week that more than 40 teachers across England had recorded lessons to be shared free via a new curriculum hub to help pupils with home learning.

The project launched on Monday with government backing and a grant of £300,000, which will cover the duration of the lockdown.

Matt Hood, the academy's principal, said: "Our hope was to create a resource that is genuinely useful for schools, and play a small part in the collective effort to make sure that every child continues to learn."

"It's truly humbling to see initial signs that this is being realised with pupils from Inverness to St Ives being supported to learn. I hope it's a small contribution to the amazing work teachers are doing up and down the country."

The academy is providing 180 sequenced video lessons each week across a range of subjects for every year group from reception through to year 10.

There is also a plan of video lessons and resources for three hours of learning a day for primary pupils and four hours for those at secondary school.

According to the academy, the £300,000 will cover set-up costs, including the development of the website, materials and systems.

It will also cover running and management costs, supporting the curriculum team, operations, technology and communications.

A spokesperson said the money will also pay for "any developments we make, after listening to what teachers and families tell us they need".

The academy clarified that the schools in its partnership will continue to own the content of their lessons. There was no plan to charge for the content once the crisis was over.

The academy is "incubated" as part of the Reach Foundation, Reach Academy Feltham's sister charity.

News

INVESTIGATES



New free schools face disruption after building delays

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

New schools due to open this September are facing delays as construction is suspended or delayed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The setback comes as secondaries scramble to deal with a population bulge following an early-2000s baby boom.

Data from the Department for Education recently revealed 17 per cent of secondary schools were full or over-capacity last year – up from 15 per cent in 2017.

Unity Howard, the director of the New Schools Network, said new schools were “critical to the national infrastructure and, after healthcare, must remain a key focus of the government during this time”.

“The last thing schools need is an influx of families that cannot find a school place ... because the free school they were promised was not built.”

Under the government’s guidance, construction work “can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible”.

In Norfolk, the construction of three new schools – Hethersett Woodside primary, Trowse primary and St Edmund primary – have been halted as the county council “temporarily” suspended building work on school sites. All three were due to open in September.

John Fisher, the council’s cabinet minister for children’s services, said the suspension was “to keep both construction workers and the wider community safe”.

“We won’t know the impact until we know how long the current restrictions are in place, but would like to assure parents that every child in Norfolk will have a school place in September.”

In Newbury, the opening of the new Highwood Copse primary has been pushed back to 2021.

In Newcastle, building work on extra classrooms at Gosforth Academy was initially halted, but resumed this week to help deal with the rising number of secondary pupils in the city. The construction company is hoping to finish by September.

However, a contingency plan agreed by Newcastle council and Gosforth Multi-Academy Trust “involves the temporary use of classroom space within existing academy buildings”.

Howard said that construction on new schools should be restarted “as an urgent priority, as soon as the scientific evidence shows it is safe for them to do so”.

But BAM Construct, which is building about 15 schools across the UK, said the pandemic meant “a significant number of new measures had to be introduced”.

At most sites it was “operating at around two thirds of capacity or better”, depending on the stage of the project. In some cases sites with about 500 workers now had just over 100.

Some supply chains also had been disrupted, but the company was in regular contact with the DfE to “work with it closely” on handover and potential opening dates.

A spokesperson added: “In the majority of cases we believe we are able to keep programmes broadly on track and delays to a minimum. But this is a fluid situation and our role is dependent on a lot of factors some are not fully in our control.”

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Primary place bulge sees more kids miss out

JAMES CARR
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The number of children offered a place at their preferred primary school this September has fallen in most areas currently facing the biggest places bulge.

Youngsters were informed last week which primary school they will be joining in the next academic year.

While national statistics are not made public until later this year, *Schools Week* analysis discovered the proportion of children who missed out on a place at their first-choice school fell at seven of the eight most in-demand councils.

Furthermore, five of these saw a higher proportion of pupils missing out on a place at their preferred schools.

Schools Week analysed National Offer Day data for the councils facing the largest demand for primary places from September – based on figures from the Local Government Association (LGA).

In total, 16 councils are expecting demand for primary places to max out capacity or exceed the number of available places.

Wokingham saw the largest rise in pupils not getting a preferred school – from 1.6 per cent in 2019-20, to 2.6 per cent in 2020-21.

Of the seven councils where a lower proportion of pupils were offered their first-preference school, Redbridge experienced the largest drop.

Last year 83.7 per cent of pupils got their first-choice school, compared with 82.2 per cent this year – a 1.5 percentage point drop.

Peterborough bucked the trend increasing the proportion of pupils getting their first place from 91.5 per cent this year to 93.7 per cent in 2020-21. The proportion of pupils getting a school they did not request also fell from 2.1 per cent to 1.1 per cent.

Despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic National Offer Day went ahead as scheduled last Thursday.

Julie McCulloch, director of policy at the Association of School and College Leaders, said: “It is impossible at this stage to predict exactly what school provision will look like in September. But it is important that we continue to plan for a return to normal at some point.”

the

2.6

challenge

Save the UK's Charities

On Sunday 26 April, the Virgin Money London Marathon would have taken place on the streets of London. The world's greatest marathon turns the capital into a colourful carnival of inspiring runners and fancy-dress-wearing fundraisers, all supported enthusiastically by the best crowds on the planet.

The race isn't just a lot of fun, it's also the world's biggest one-day fundraising event, generating **£66.4 million** for thousands of charities in 2019. This year, the London Marathon, like so many other mass participation sports events, has been postponed, leaving charities facing a £4 billion shortfall. But you can help...

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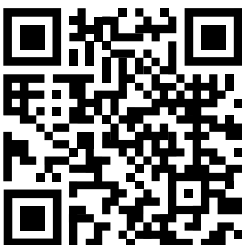
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Investigation

How a government scheme is leaving children without food

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

INVESTIGATES

The free school meals voucher scheme is three weeks old. It has been dogged by an overwhelmed and underfunctioning website, parents are being left without support and teachers forced to buy food for desperate families. The government claims things are improving, but are they? John Dickens investigates ...

I've got nothing. No milk, no bread, no food, nothing."

That was the voicemail message a school received from a sobbing parent who had been waiting two weeks for her free school meal vouchers to arrive.

Another mother told *Schools Week* she could only afford one meal a day for herself, so she could feed her children, as she was unable to access the £60 of vouchers from the national scheme's overwhelmed website.

She's one of potentially hundreds of thousands of parents missing out on support to feed their children while schools are closed after the Edenred website failed to cope with demand.

School leaders have said some parents are still yet to receive vouchers – three weeks after the scheme was launched – despite the government insisting all orders up to April 19 have now been issued.

The website, which was taken offline at Easter for an upgrade, also continues to be overwhelmed. Staff were told to wait in hour-long queues just to get into the site.

Meanwhile, teachers are donating food for emergency parcels or sending parents to foodbanks.

It's also emerged that the government ignored an offer from a firm to help boost the national scheme's capacity, despite knowing parents in poverty had been waiting weeks for support.

An investigation by *Schools Week* today reveals the damning stories of those parents left without food.

'I've not received vouchers for two weeks – can you please get in touch with me?'

The government's messaging this week has been that early problems with its national free



"We will not subject families to that nonsense"

meal voucher system are well in the past.

In a blog post, the DfE said they "know that for a large number of schools, the system is working".

Andy Hudson, from the Department for Education's pupil premium and school food division, told schools the Edenred website was "really starting to fly" after the "early difficulties".

But on the ground, school staff tell a different story.

More than half of the 271 free school meal pupils at Weston Favell Academy, in Northampton, were still waiting for their first voucher, ordered in the first week of the Easter holidays.

The school's data manager, Cindy Miles, said one pupil's parent had called the school in tears. She told them: "I have not received my vouchers on email. For two weeks, can you please get in touch with me? I've got nothing, no milk, no bread, no food, nothing."

Miles said the call was "heartbreaking". The school bought its own vouchers, and a food

parcel, which was delivered direct to the family.

But continuing issues accessing the website this week has left Miles unable to check which parents have vouchers.

She said the school had instead been calling parents "every day, but we're completely helpless. It's awful."

Siobhan Morris, a mother-of-two from Wembley, north London, said she had vouchers worth £60 that she had been unable to redeem from the website.

"Whenever I eventually get onto the website you just can't redeem vouchers. I can't select which supermarket.

"My shopping costs have gone up by £30-£40 a week with the children home. These vouchers are needed . . . it's making life difficult.

"I've been going without meals myself – I just have one a day now.

Continued on next page

Investigation

Teachers donate their own food

Morris's eldest child is a pupil at Elsley primary school. Its head, Raphael Moss, said the parents of more than half of his 72 pupils on free school meals were still waiting for vouchers ordered three weeks ago (April 2), although newer orders seem to have been delivered.

He's since directed parents to local foodbanks, with teachers also making donations to emergency food parcels.

Moss said the only way he could access the website was by logging on at 1.30am on Tuesday. Other business managers have also reported visiting the website through the night after spending hours in queues during working hours.

Edenred told *Schools Week* the Easter upgrades had been "instrumental in ensuring we have accelerated the pace at which eGift cards have been sent to families, that the order experience is improving and average waiting times on the site are falling".

But it is advising people to only visit outside of "peak hours", and yesterday it told schools they may now have to wait up to four days for vouchers to be delivered.

Schools are now turning away from the scheme and instead plan to take a chance on claiming back their expenditure on their own schemes.

Schools can use other voucher schemes, but government guidance suggests they can only claim back these costs in certain circumstances. The Treasury is picking up the tab for vouchers ordered under the national scheme.

Hudson said yesterday that schools will be reimbursed for using other schemes where the national system was "inappropriate", such as where there were no local supermarkets signed up to the national scheme.

But further guidance suggests schools will only be reimbursed where they are unable to cover any extra costs from their existing budget. The DfE confirmed schools are only eligible for reimbursement where additional costs result in having to use historic surpluses or increase the size of a historic deficit.

Heads, many of whom had set up their own arrangements before switching to the national system, say amending this so any other voucher schemes can be claimed back would quickly solve Edenred's capacity demands (as many schools would go elsewhere).

'The thought of a family going through that made me so angry'

Jeremy Hannay, head of Three Bridges primary school in Southall, west London, is reverting to buying £3,500 of vouchers every two weeks direct from a supermarket after

"The school is completely helpless. It's awful."

Sainsbury's declined a parent's vouchers at the checkout.

"The thought of a family going through that made me so angry – we are not going to subject families to that nonsense anymore."

Jo Wotton, the group catering manager at Aspire Academy Trust, was waiting in the checkout line at her local Morrisons in Bodmin, Cornwall, when she saw the women in front "getting flustered at the till".

"She had a school voucher code on her phone that wouldn't scan. The checkout worker said it was about the 20th time that day. The woman was really upset – she was embarrassed."

Wooton paid for the shopping.

A school food webinar was told of similar incidents this week.

Hudson said an issue with a "particular

supermarket" was "resolved" last week and insisted head offices were contacting their branches to "stamp it out".

"It has been clarified, and it shouldn't be happening."

Sainsbury's said it was not aware of any issues with vouchers not scanning. Morrisons did not respond to a request for comment.

Government ignores offers to help

Nick Waldron, the head of Pinner Park primary school, west London, discovered on Sunday that vouchers for 19 families, ordered at the start of the Easter holidays, had been cancelled.

The order has become "live" again, but he is unable to access the website to check whether parents have redeemed them.

"The vast majority of my parents have not been able to use a voucher to buy food. This is a scandal... These are our poorest, most vulnerable children whose parents need this support."

Waldron is moving to a voucher system run by Wonde, an edtech firm, which had quickly built up its own voucher system before the national scheme was launched.

It currently has more than 4,000 schools signed up and states on social media that vouchers are delivered to parents within 24 hours.

Schools Week also understands the company, which actually has 16,000 schools using its full range of services, had offered help to the government on multiple

Continued on next page

Schools don't have to wait for 'evidence'

Schools can start delivering free school meals or food vouchers to newly eligible pupils before they receive "evidence" of universal credit claims, says the children's minister.

Vicky Ford appeared by video link in front of the education select committee on Tuesday.

Asked about pupils who have only become eligible for free school meals during the pandemic because of a change in their family's financial position, Ford said schools "have the ability to add more people into that system as they know they become vulnerable".

More than 1.4 million people have signed up

to the universal credit benefits scheme since mid-March.

Ford said it was "up to each school, and always has been, to add the pupils that they believe to be entitled on to the system.

"They are doing the absolute right thing to make sure they get them food, and then when you get the evidence coming through that becomes more official."

She said schools can give such pupils the food before the "whole payment comes through. I understand that this is going to be challenging with a lot more people registering than before."

Investigation

occasions, including while problems were emerging with Edenred's inability to cope with demand.

The offers were not taken up.

Wonde did not want to comment when approached by *Schools Week*.

Hannay said: "I can't believe the level of sheer incompetence – the numbers should have been anticipated. Why not use five or six companies?"

The Department for Education said the contract was awarded under regulations allowing for the urgent provision of services in response to Covid-19.

An Edenred spokesperson said it had been a government supplier for the past five years and "validated through a competitive tendering process by the Crown Commercial Service".

But Labour MP Siobhain McDonagh says the government should have utilised councils, many of whom had already set up their own arrangements while waiting for the national scheme to launch.

This appears to be a move favoured by the Welsh government, which last week scrapped its own national voucher scheme.

Education minister Kirsty Williams said the way forward for Wales was for councils to decide what worked best for their local communities. "We know local approaches are working well".

Supermarket's 'grave concern' over failures

The system has also angered some supermarket bosses.

Jo Whitfield, the chief executive of Co-op retail, has written to Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, and Edenred to express her "grave concern" about the national scheme.

A spokesperson said the Co-op was excluded despite "repeated requests to be a part of it, and despite us offering our help in developing a national scheme".

The supermarket had already launched its own £20 voucher scheme for the 6,500 Co-op Academies pupils, and felt it could provide further advice on getting any scheme right.

The spokesperson said Co-op was the "most local and convenient retailer for many families". It continued to seek "urgent reassurance from the secretary of state that he would find an immediate solution to



Please wait

Due to high demand since the lockdown began, we are operating slower than usual. We apologise for the short wait you experience to access the Online Ordering system.

You're currently in a queue, where the average wait time is approximately 1 hour.

allow the Co-op to participate". Williamson is yet to respond.

Schools have questioned why other budget supermarkets, such as Aldi and Lidl, were excluded (although Aldi has since joined).

The six supermarkets in the scheme include Waitrose and Marks and Spencer.

A letter sent by Edenred in early April, seen by *Schools Week*, said the six were those with "existing eGift card product which was already available and in circulation with Edenred".

A spokesperson for the firm said it had not excluded any supermarkets from the scheme, and had been working tirelessly to get others on board. This rests on ensuring supermarkets have the technology and processes for families to redeem codes, they added.

In the letter seen by *Schools Week*, Lidl and Iceland were said to be "progressing operational discussions".

But is it too late?

Neither the DfE nor Edenred would provide figures on how many voucher submissions had been received and how many have been issued.

An update from the two parties on Tuesday said £15 million worth of voucher codes had been redeemed.

More than a quarter of that (£4 million) was redeemed on Monday and Tuesday.

At £15 a weekly voucher, this suggests that one million vouchers have been issued.

Edenred said more than 11,000 schools have placed orders for

codes – 46 per cent of England's schools. There are 1.3 million pupils on free school meals overall, meaning those 11,000 schools have roughly 600,000 free school meal pupils.

The scheme has been running three weeks, so up to 1.8 million vouchers would have needed to have been issued. As many as 800,000 pupils are waiting on at least one weekly voucher (nearly 44 per cent).

And that's not including any potential issues parents have with accessing those vouchers on the website.

There are also questions over Edenred's data. For instance, in a letter earlier this month the company it had 16,000 schools "successfully registered for the scheme" and was looking to "onboard" others.

'We are turning it around'

Speaking at the virtual education select committee hearing on Tuesday, Vicky Ford, the children's minister, said the company was "turning it around. Getting food to those who would have expected is an absolute priority."

Williamson also told *Schools Week* the "initial technical issues" had been "rapidly addressed", highlighting the amount of work that "went in to developing a scheme of this magnitude to provide school meal vouchers in such a short period of time".

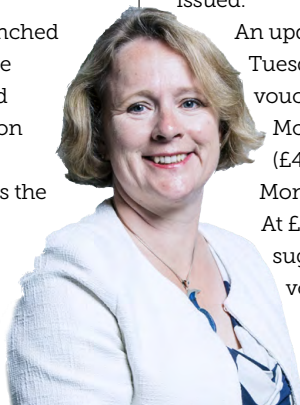
He said Edenred continued to work "day and night" to process orders and develop capability.

"I'd like to thank schools for their continued patience while we implement this new scheme, and their continued determination in supporting the families who need it most."

A DfE spokesperson said that more than £20 million worth of vouchers have been converted into supermarket gift cards as *Schools Week* went to press.

HOW IT WORKS

Schools can vouchers individually online, with a code sent via email to each family, which has to be redeemed from the website
Or they can arrange a bulk order of multiple codes, which schools can send on to a family or create an eGift card for a preferred supermarket which can be redeemed online by parents



Vicky Ford

Politics

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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New shadow ed sec admits NES plans didn't reach voters

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Freddie Whittaker meets Rebecca Long-Bailey, Labour's new shadow education secretary

The lack of an "overarching message" from Labour on its flagship national education service (NES) was one of the reasons it lost the last general election, says the new shadow education secretary.

But Rebecca Long-Bailey says the "fantastic" policy will survive and be developed by Labour under Sir Keir Starmer's leadership. She has pledged to "flesh out the detail" in the "next few years".

A flagship policy of Jeremy Corbyn, the party's former leader, the service was an umbrella term for a free "cradle to grave" education that had no tuition fees. It also pledged to replace Ofsted and to abandon primary tests.

But although elements of the policy were extensively covered in the media and seemed to reach voters, many felt the overall vision did not hit home.

"There are a number of reasons as to why we lost, we know that, but one of the reasons is that we didn't have that overarching message that explained to people what the national education service was for and what a Labour government was for," said Long-Bailey in an exclusive interview with *Schools Week*.

But the former party leadership candidate believes the NES was key policy "for a reason", adding that that the coronavirus crisis has highlighted the "huge role" schools play in society.

"If we're going to make sure that we don't just see social mobility, the odd few climbing the ladder and doing very well for themselves, but everybody rising up and realising their potential, then we've got to have a cradle to grave national education service that means education is a right to all."

Although Long-Bailey and Starmer are from different wings of the party, they are on the same page on most education issues. They both oppose academic selection, favour replacing Ofsted and primary school tests, and want to close tax loopholes for private schools.

EXCLUSIVE



“It's not a secret that I oppose academies

Starmer told *Schools Week* during the campaign that "all schools should be under local democratic control".

Long-Bailey agrees, and says Labour will not change its policy, which proposes that no more free schools and academies and existing academies brought back under the control of "parents, teachers and local communities".

However, with most secondary schools now operating as academies, the new shadow education secretary acknowledges there needs to be a "discussion about how quickly we can make that local accountability happen".

"It's not a secret that I oppose academies. That's not to say that we don't have fantastic teachers and fantastic leaders in many of our academies, because we do. It just so happens that they're in an academy school."

Long-Bailey says she has problems with their accountability. They can become "heavily commercialised" with their own terms and conditions for staff. This is "not acceptable".

"We need to have harmonisation across the sector so that good academies can't

cherry-pick the best staff in one particular area.

"We need to have a standardised education system. So wherever you are, in whatever part of the country, as a parent you can be guaranteed that your child is going to have the gold standard education that they should be entitled to."

Long-Bailey's first task before she can flesh out Labour's education policies is to hold the government to account for its coronavirus response.

She believes "clearer" communication is needed about plans to reopen schools, and warns of "a lot of concern" among school staff about a rushed return.

It follows a Sunday Times report that ministers are considering three dates for schools to reopen, with the earliest in just three weeks' time. The report was later dismissed by Gavin Williamson, the education secretary.

Long-Bailey added: "Schools, teachers and staff are worried that they'll be asked to reopen in a matter of days in the same way that they were asked to close, and that can't happen."

Politics

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Meet new Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer's shadow education team

Rebecca Long-Bailey: Shadow education secretary

The former shadow business secretary was appointed education secretary by Sir Keir Starmer after being runner-up to him in the recent Labour leadership election.

The MP for Salford and Eccles in Greater Manchester since 2015, Long-Bailey served on the frontbench throughout the entirety of Jeremy Corbyn's tenure as leader, initially as a shadow Treasury minister and then shadow chief secretary to the Treasury before moving to the business brief.

Born in Manchester in 1979, Long-Bailey worked as a solicitor before entering Parliament, but has also spoken of how jobs held early on in her life helped shape her



politics. She worked at the shop counter of a pawn shop, and also worked in call centres, a furniture factory and as a postwoman.

Long-Bailey became interested in politics after seeing her parents struggle. She said she was "angry at the inequality and unfairness I had seen and I wanted to do something about it".

Long-Bailey was considered to be the Corbynite candidate in this year's leadership election, and voiced her support for many of his policies during the campaign. She secured 135,218 votes, around 27 per cent of the total vote, coming second to Starmer.

She succeeds Angela Rayner as shadow education secretary, her friend and flatmate, who won the deputy leadership election and is now the party's chair.

Margaret Greenwood: Shadow schools minister

Greenwood is a former secondary-school English teacher who has been the MP for Wirral West since 2015. She served as shadow work and pensions secretary under Jeremy Corbyn, and now replaces Mike Kane, who has



moved to become a shadow transport minister. Greenwood backed Long-Bailey in the leadership election.

Tulip Siddiq: Shadow children's and early years minister

The MP for Hampstead and Kilburn previously served as shadow early years minister between 2016 and 2017, when she resigned to vote against the triggering of Article 50. She returned to the same role in January this year to replace Tracy Brabin, who was promoted to shadow culture



secretary. In his reshuffle, Starmer added the shadow children's brief previously held by Steve Reed to her portfolio.

Emma Hardy: Shadow further and higher education minister

A former primary-school teacher and National Union of Teachers organiser, Emma Hardy previously contributed to *Schools Week* and has been a vocal campaigner on education issues for many years. She was elected the MP for Hull West and Hessle in 2017. She was initially mooted as a



potential shadow education secretary, but remained in the shadow FE/HE post she assumed in January, following Gordon Marsden's election defeat.

Toby Perkins: Shadow apprenticeships and lifelong learning minister

Perkins has been the MP for Chesterfield since 2010 and is therefore the longest-serving parliamentarian in the shadow education team. He was previously a shadow small business minister in Ed Miliband's team, and served as shadow minister for the armed



forces in the early months of Corbyn's leadership. His apprenticeships and lifelong learning portfolio is a new one created by the party.

Schools pay out for cancelled trips

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

INVESTIGATES

Schools are covering the costs of cancelled trips and paying out thousands to parents as travel providers refuse to offer refunds, despite sector guidance that schools may "need cash returned".

The coronavirus pandemic has forced education travel companies to cancel trips, with experts warning many could close.

Last month the government banned visits overseas, before it closed schools and restricted domestic trips.

The Institute of Outdoor Learning (IOL), the sector's professional body, issued guidance stating "not all clients are in the same position and that whilst some may want and need cash returned, others may be in a position to defer a booking and some may have insurance cover".

"The starting point in your dialogue with the client should be to establish which positions are viable options for both of you."

But providers such as PGL and JCA Adventure are offering only to reschedule trips, with schools forced to pay back cash to parents from their own budgets while they look at whether insurers will pay out.

Steve Stafford, the headteacher at Co-op Academy Smithies Moor in West Yorkshire, said his school would have to "make cuts elsewhere" to pay back £3,600 to year 6 parents after PGL refused to refund its cancelled visit children to the company's Caythorpe Court site.

The trip cost £6,600 – £150 per pupil – and included 44 children from across years 5 and 6.

Stafford said PGL had rolled-over the booking to next year and claimed it was not responsible for paying back money to parents as its contract was with the school, not them.

The headteacher added: "On behalf of our parents we'll have to reconsider our relationship with PGL and I know other schools are doing the same."



A PGL spokesperson told *Schools Week* the coronavirus crisis "has had a significant impact on our business" and it was contacting all affected customers and working to rebook "as many trips as possible to an alternative date".

Guidance from the Association of British Insurers (ABI) advises schools to first seek a refund with their provider, but "most schools will be covered under their insurance policy".

"If the venue hosting a school trip can no longer do so because of official government guidance, the closure of the venue, or their reluctance to accept school trips due to their stated concerns about the spread of coronavirus, the school will be covered."

The PGL spokesperson said it was "therefore critical" schools worked closely with the company to ensure "if trips need to be cancelled, that the correct process is followed to ensure that an insurance claim will be successful, and, if not, to discuss how else we may be able to help".

Jamie Nairn, the headteacher of Wootton primary school in Northamptonshire, said he had been unable to secure a refund from JCA Adventure for a £3,000 trip to the company's Condover Hall in early May.

JCA had offered to reschedule the visit,

but Nairn said it was a "priority" to pay back the cash to help support "vulnerable families" as many Wootton pupils came from low income families or with parents recently furloughed.

He said the school paying out might cause short-term cash-flow problems, but it would "make savings elsewhere for this academic year" while insurers were dealt with.

JCA Adventure did not respond to a request for comment.

Garry Ratcliffe, the chief executive of The Galaxy Trust, estimates it would be claiming about £95,000 from insurers to cover cancelled trips with various providers, including PGL.

He said it was difficult to strike a balance between giving companies the opportunity to resolve refund requests, contacting insurance companies and responding to requests from parents for speedy refunds.

Andy Robinson, the IOL's chief executive, said the crisis left many "outdoor learning providers to schools in danger of permanently closing".

"This has the potential to seriously impact on availability of great outdoor based developmental experiences for school age children."

No data collection and academy checks relaxed

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government has halted all but the "most essential data collections" and relaxed academy checks so leaders can focus on the coronavirus outbreak.

However, academies in financial difficulty as a result of the pandemic may be offered help from its cost-cutting advisers.

In a letter to academy trust accounting officers, Eileen Milner, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) boss, said the government "may be able to assist" schools in trouble by matching them with a school resource management adviser (SRMA).

Schools Week revealed in 2018 that the Department for Education was to spend millions on an army of cost-cutting consultants.

The programme has been controversial, particularly after we revealed last year that advisers had told schools to limit children's lunch portions, keep money raised for local

charities and replace experienced teachers with support staff.

In her letter, Milner said SRMAs "can provide a range of support in this difficult period, including carrying out the vital day-to-day activities of a school business manager/trust finance director where these staff members are absent to providing advice on long-term strategies to cope with reduced income associated with site closures".

The advice would be provided free.

Milner's letter comes after the government confirmed that it was halting "all but the most essential data collections" to "help reduce the burden" on schools and councils.

She said she recognised "the pressure and uncertainty academy trusts are currently facing with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic".

The budget forecast return outturn (BFRO), due to be submitted by academies next month, is among the cancelled collections. The data helps the government

report back on academy spending to the Treasury.

When asked how it would ensure adequate oversight of academy finances, the Department for Education said it would use data already collected and future statistics to "ensure we still retain a view on the financial position of academies".

The ESFA will also pause consideration of schools' compliance with complaints and exclusions regulations, and has extended its normal deadlines for responding to safeguarding enquiries.

The government will also not begin any new routine funding audits or financial management and governance reviews covering for "at least" the duration of the school closures.

However, Milner said the deadline for academy trust financial statements and returns would still be December 31, "given trusts will commence this work in late summer to early autumn, which is still several months away".

SCHOOLSWEEK REPORTER | @SCHOOLSWEEK

Vulnerable children are 'safe' despite low attendance

The children's minister says vulnerable children are being kept safe, despite just 5 per cent attending school.

Vicky Ford has also brushed off calls to make attendance compulsory.

Department for Education statistics published on Tuesday show that just 1 per cent of children are in schools closed last month for all except vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers.

But the DfE estimates that 5 per cent of children considered "in need" or with an education, health and care plan, and 2 per cent of all children of critical workers, are in classrooms.

Tom Hunt, the Conservative MP for Ipswich, told the education select committee on Wednesday this was "concerning" as it was "so far below the 20 per cent [attendance] anticipated".

He suggested the government consider

making it a requirement for vulnerable pupils to attend school.

Tulip Siddiq, the shadow children's minister, said teachers were "worried that they are unable to see 'at-risk' children as they usually would and that they are not getting help".

Anne Longfield, the children's commissioner, suggested these children were at home where "many of them will be exposed to a cocktail of secondary risks, including domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse, and parental mental health problems".

But Ford said: "Just because attendance of school may be low doesn't mean those children aren't being safeguarded in other ways."

She said if a child had a social worker, that professional would be making sure "we have eyes on them and they get visits".

She also said for pupils with education, health and care plans – who were classed as 'vulnerable' – "may be safer at home... people

are very concerned they don't want to get coronavirus and I can absolutely understand that."

Siddiq called for more funding for children's charities and better guidance for local authorities to support vulnerable children.

But Ford said: "We are working across government to make sure those children are safeguarded; they are our priority at this time."

The DfE data found school attendance fell sharply from 3.7 per cent (almost 350,000 pupils) on the first day of partial closures to 1.3 per cent (less than 150,000) at the beginning of the second week.

Attendance hasn't risen above 1 per cent since early April.

About 61 per cent of schools remained open as of last Friday. The number of teachers in classrooms has also fallen from almost 300,000 when partial closures began to just over 50,000.

News

EXCLUSIVE



DfE spent £50k trying to hide academy failure

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

The Department for Education spent almost £50,000 attempting to keep secret its failure to properly vet a businessman it allowed to run an academy trust that later collapsed.

Johnson Kane co-founded the Education Fellowship Trust in 2012, and became chief executive for its 12 schools and 6,500 children until its closed six years later.

The government was forced to release details earlier this year that proved it did not vet Kane after a freelance journalist took it to court.

It also emerged during the legal hearings that the businessman, who earned £160,000 heading the trust, lied about having held a senior position at John Lewis and a board position at the British Airports Authority (BAA), and to have run a venture capital bank.

While Kane had served as commercial services director for BAA, he was never on the board and never graduated from the sales floor at John Lewis.

Now a freedom of information request has revealed the DfE spent £44,668 in legal costs fighting Geraldine Hackett's request to make the information public, including about £26,000 in government legal department fees and £18,000 in counsel's fee.

Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said it was "clearly a waste of public money... in what appears to be an effort to cover up a further egregious example of failure within the academies system."

"The public needs and deserves to know how and why decisions like this were reached in the first place and the government must be held to account for its failures," he said.

Ofsted found a number of Kane's schools to be failing under his leadership, while others accumulated millions in debt.

The trust was the first to close all its schools. Hackett submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request in September 2017, requesting details of the background checks on Kane before he founded the trust, with documents discussing his performance and that of the trust.

The DfE denied her request, a decision upheld by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Hackett then took the case to a tribunal.

In November last year the tribunal judge ruled in her favour.

When presented with the legal decision, she said: "The DfE's defence [for not releasing the information] was it would undermine confidence in the education system. Well it certainly does."

Headteacher Jules White, who runs the Worth Less school funding campaign, said the department's legal costs came at a time when it was "telling cash-starved schools that they must make every penny count".

Schools have been told they must tighten their pursestrings as funding is squeezed.

While launching a scheme to send cost-cutting consultants into schools, Lord Agnew, the former academies minister, said it was vital to make "every penny count".

White said: "The DfE must show financial credibility before it can lecture schools in this area. It would be most helpful if it could justify this most recent legal expenditure."

The DfE failed to respond when asked if the expenditure was a worthwhile use of public funds.

However, a spokesperson for the department said: "Since the introduction of regional schools commissioners, the department's processes for sponsor approval have been strengthened, while senior appointments are a matter for academy trusts."

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Met agrees to review Safer Schools postings

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

The Metropolitan Police will review its Safer Schools officers scheme across London following concerns it has "disproportionately negative consequences" for black and minority ethnic groups and those with special needs.

The Met will collect and analyse data on the equality implications of the initiative in which officers are attached to schools across the capital.

The review follows legal action brought on behalf of a black autistic boy who was investigated by the Crown Prosecution Service after a verbal argument with a member of staff at his school.

The family's representatives argued the Met had failed to comply with the public sector equality duty when deploying officers in schools.

Last month, the High Court granted permission for a judicial review and a hearing was expected later in the year.

However, the police have agreed to settle the case.

Dan Rosenberg, an education law expert at Simpson Millar who is representing the family, said no one disputed that deploying police in schools benefited students and the wider community.

"But there is a risk that the presence of police officers in schools may have disproportionately negative consequences for black and ethnic minority boys and/or children with special education needs and disabilities, causing them to be drawn into the criminal justice system unnecessarily."

A Metropolitan Police (MPS) spokesperson said the claim had been "withdrawn by mutual agreement on the basis that the MPS is undertaking further analysis in respect of the Safer Schools partnership and the role of Safer Schools officers."

"The MPS maintains that Safer Schools partnerships are enormously beneficial to pupils, schools and communities. They continue to be an important part of the Met's work."

Schools Week has previously revealed how funding cuts have left schools in some part of the country losing dedicated officers.

However, the number of officers in London's schools was found to be on the rise, jumping nearly 10 per cent from 270 in 2014-15, to 295 in 2017.

What you may have missed over the Easter break

Ofqual's proposals for this year's exams

Ofqual says pupils entered for exams in year 10 and below should get calculated grades this summer.

The regulator last week launched a 14-day consultation on its plans to award pupils a calculated grade after Covid-19 forced the cancellation of this year's tests. It said potential disruption over timetabling and teaching arrangements next year were behind its U-turn on allowing pupils in year 10 and below to be awarded grades. It had said grades would be awarded to year 11s only.

This year schools will have to award each student the grade they "would most likely have received had the exams taken place". They must also rank each pupil within each grade and for each subject.

Ofqual admitted it "recognises the possibility" some may try to exploit the "exceptional arrangements" by "seeking inappropriately to influence" schools' judgments.

It said the grade and ranking should not be shared, and attempts to influence the results might be investigated as malpractice.

Ofqual proposed to standardise grades by

looking at the historical outcomes for each centre, the prior attainment (key stage 2 or GCSE) of this year's pupils and those in previous years within each school, and the expected national grade distribution for the subject.

It said putting too much weight on teacher-assessed grades was "likely" to produce results that were "overall too lenient". It therefore favoured more weight on statistical expectations that could determine the most likely distribution of grades for each centre (based on the criteria above), and then use the rank order to assign grades to individual pupils in line with that grade distribution.

This meant the final calculated grades would "more often differ from those submitted", but the advantages included a more consistent standard across schools that was "more likely to be fair".

It would not attempt to standardise grades to consider "unconscious bias" based on characteristics such as pupils' socio-economic status, ethnicity or gender. It also had "reservations" over using data that considered the trajectory of schools showing improvement or

deterioration due to "potential unfairness caused by the unreliability of any trajectory predictions and the disadvantage that this might cause students in those centres with stable results".

Pupils would be allowed to appeal their calculated grades, but only on the grounds that a mistake was made during an exam board's standardisation process.

Ofqual believed it was "not meaningful or appropriate" for students to be able to appeal based on their school's grade judgment or its ranking. It said it also did not believe that it was fair for schools to appeal against the standardisation model.

Pupils who believed they would have got a better grade had they taken their exams could resit in the additional autumn exams. Details on arrangements for the latter are yet to be published. The consultation closes on April 29.

Pupils who believed they would have got a better grade had they taken their exams could resit in the additional autumn exams. Details on arrangements for the latter are yet to be published. The consultation closes on April 29.

DfE reveals school furlough rules

State schools with private income streams from catering, sports facilities lettings or boarding provision can furlough affected staff, the government has confirmed.

In an update published on Friday, schools were also advised to reinstate the contracts of any contingent workers, such as supply teachers, terminated because of the coronavirus - but only where the school was the worker's employer.

The guidance states that in this case schools should "reinstate these contracts on the terms previously agreed, as long as the contractor is not already accessing alternative support through another government support scheme".

It also confirms private schools should access the furlough scheme "to retain staff and enable the school to reopen fully in due course".

It said that it did not "in general,



expect [state] schools to furlough staff". However, it understood that "in some instances, schools may have a separate private income stream (for example, catering, sports facilities lettings or boarding provision funded by parents in state boarding schools).

"Where this income has either stopped or been reduced and there are staff that are typically paid from those private income streams, it may be appropriate to furlough staff."

Schools were advised, however, to make necessary savings from their existing budget or consider options to redeploy these staff before looking at furloughing. The full guidance can be read here.

Grammar school fan gets DfE gig

A grammar school fan and former chief of staff to Theresa May has been appointed as a non-executive director of the Department for Education.

The department said Nick Timothy, a former New Schools Network director, would bring a "range of experience that will support our work as we continue to develop our world-leading education system". Board members advise on and monitor delivery of the department's strategic priorities.

Timothy, also a special adviser to May during her time as home secretary, was director of the NSN from 2015-16 before stepping down to work in Downing Street. He resigned as a chief aide to the former prime minister in June 2017 after the Conservatives lost their majority in that year's general election.

He is a huge fan of grammar schools and is widely thought to have been the driving force behind May's failed bid to lift the ban on new selective institutions.

In 2015 he told *The Daily Telegraph* that the law preventing new grammar schools was "limiting the number of good schools". "I do believe in the diversity of the system and choice for parents, and I don't see why selection couldn't be a part of that choice."

The DfE said "all appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the decision-making process".

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Free meals fiasco is a disgrace - it must get sorted out now

We know the government is working around the clock to help schools navigate these unprecedented times.

We know a lot of decisions are being made very quickly, with very little time between problems being identified and solutions being enacted.

But the Department for Education has totally shattered any goodwill from schools with its national free school meal voucher scheme fiasco.

Put simply: it's not good enough.

As we report this week, hundreds of thousands of families living in poverty are likely to go without food because the system is failing.

Neither the DfE, nor its supplier Edenred, will reveal how many families are being left hungry.

And even worse, three weeks after it was launched, schools still can't get onto the website to check which of their parents are waiting for support.

The disclosure this week that the department ignored a company's offer to help clear the backlog is also hugely troubling.

The edtech firm, Wonde, had quickly built up

its own free meal voucher scheme. It was, and still is, in an ideal position to jump in and help out.

It believes it can deliver thousands of vouchers to parents within 24 hours. The offer for help still sits unanswered.

Meanwhile, parents are telling schools they have no food left.

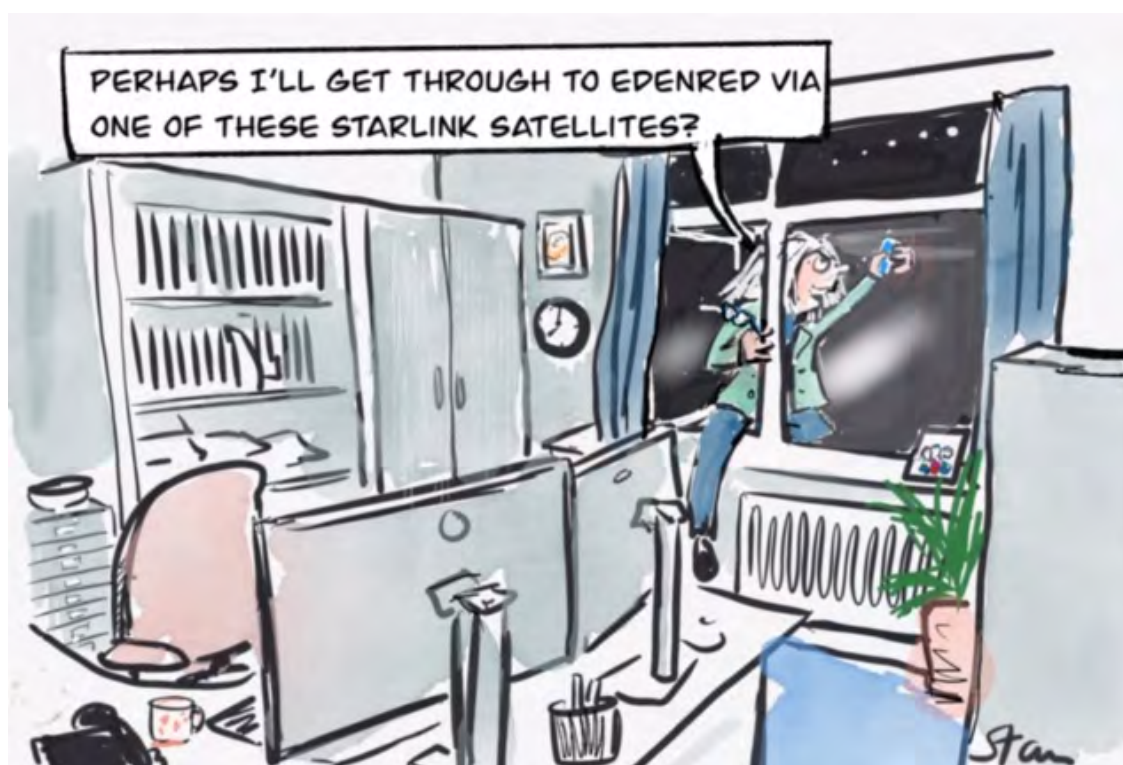
The DfE has to take this seriously, and act now.

School staff should not have to be staying awake until the early hours of the morning just to log onto the Edenred website to check their pupils are getting food.

It's hugely concerning that problems still persist after the capacity upgrade over the Easter weekend.

The government also needs to make sure the firm has enough staff so schools can actually get through to someone to address their concerns - if not, families will continue to be failed.

Heads say a simple solution is to allow all schools to claim back for buying vouchers under different suppliers or local arrangements - as it was before the national scheme was launched.



SCHOOLS WEEK



Get in touch.

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OR CALL 0203 4321 392



A testament to teachers in testing times

... Michele Gordon

Absolutely beautiful. Full marks for your articulate, eloquent piece of writing. You brought tears to my eyes. Teachers have moulded you with generosity and kindness and guided you on to a path for success. Thank you so much for a delightful, heartfelt, powerful piece of literature.

... Adetayo Babs

I am almost moved to tears by your words. Thank you so much. I am a science teacher in a typical inner London school in which we are not just teachers; we are social workers, counsellors, "punching bags" for teenage frustrations of simply being teenagers and much more ... but I would not change it for the world. I am sharing this with as many of my colleagues as possible. It will definitely cheer them up.

... Riffith Khan

What a befitting tribute to the teaching profession. Your optimism and gratitude shines through each line. A truly inspirational piece that revives faith not only in our youth but in a promising future once more. Thank you.

There is only one clear path to reopening schools

... Alexa Forbes

This is an incredibly tough time for everyone and we're all doing our best to set great work to enrich, stretch and educate remotely in a way that students will enjoy and all abilities can access. While we're doing this, we're protecting each other and the NHS by staying at home. I am horrified by the suggestion that schools returning early is acceptable.

... Nichola Barrs

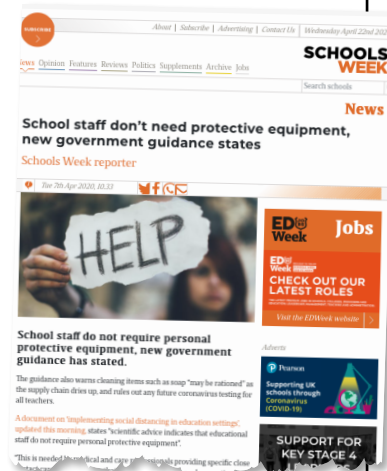
I don't know any child that is capable of proper social distancing, especially in a classroom. I can only imagine that the death toll of teachers and staff will be higher than anticipated and totally unacceptable. I am a mother of five who has underlying health

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Julie Frith

School staff don't need protective equipment, new government guidance states

I work in a special needs setting in which some students have to be helped with handwashing. They don't understand social distancing. Some may cough and sneeze not knowing to get tissues. Some constantly have their hands in their mouth, and some spit. Where do we stand with these issues if we have no protective equipment?



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

issues. Four of my children are in the 10 to 18-year-old category that has a 0.2 per cent death rate. I'm not sure how many are at school in this age range, but undoubtedly it will be in the millions. This makes 0.2 per cent a much scarier figure than it might seem at first. Will teachers and children be the first to be thrown into the coronavirus test tube? Nobody knows how applying this will work in the "unmodelled" real world. Another "care home scandal" waiting in the wings in my frightened opinion.

A seven-step plan to reopen schools

... Cathie Burgess

This is a scarily ignorant article that ignores the realities of life in school. As many people have said, social distancing in schools is not possible. Our pupils sit next to one another in classrooms, walk around the building from one class to another, sit at the same desks as other pupils have sat at. When we need to explain why they got an answer wrong, we sit next to them to take them through things step by step. What about the young person who cries because a family member has died – do we stay two metres away saying "there, there, I sympathise?" Get real! Teaching is, and always will be, a profession that brings us into close physical proximity to our students, and them to their peers.






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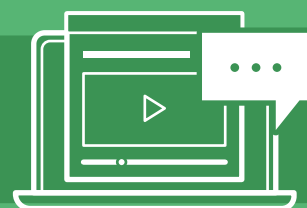
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Profile

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER



“Teachers are controlled to within an inch of their lives”

Freddie Whittaker meets Dr Patrick Roach, the new NASUWT leader who says he's determined to put his members first

It's hardly the coronation Dr Patrick Roach imagined. The new general secretary of the NASUWT was supposed to take up the mantle in front of a hall full of delegates at the union's

annual conference in Birmingham.

Instead the start of his tenure was marked by a press release embargoed for Easter Sunday and a slew of headlines about the impact of coronavirus on schools.

Roach takes over following a difficult period for the union, which has been embroiled in a bitter dispute with its staff over changes to

their pensions. Last year it admitted to breaking the law by allowing Chris Keates, Roach's predecessor, to overstay her term.

Schools Week also revealed last summer how three senior national officials had been serving lengthy suspensions following disputes with the organisation's top team.

Roach won't comment on the suspensions,

Profile: Patrick Roach



but he does say that maintaining good relations between the union and its staff is a “priority”.

“Our workforce is vitally important to the NASUWT, working hand-in-glove with our lay activists. I want that to continue,” he says. “My commitment is ensuring that we have good relations with both of our recognised unions, and I’ll be looking forward to working with them in that spirit.”

Roach was appointed unopposed last December after Paul Nesbitt, a challenger from the union’s executive, failed to get the necessary nominations to force a contest. To describe Roach as the establishment candidate would be an understatement: he has worked for the union since 1998 and served as Keates’s deputy for about a decade.

Born in Walsall in the mid-1960s, the comprehensive-school educated Roach taught politics and sociology in FE colleges, and lectured on social policy in universities before working on a range of programmes that focused on teacher education, disaffected and excluded young people and engaging parents and local communities. He has a PhD in sociology.

He tells me he never expected to end up in the top job and was “bowled over” and “humbled” by the appointment. “When I started with the

NASUWT it was just great to be in service on behalf of teachers,” he says. “I come from an education and public services background. I came into the NASUWT wanting to make a difference for teachers, so that they can make the difference they’re committed to doing for

“The big issues are those that impact on members’ health and wellbeing”

children and young people.”

Starting as an education union leader at a time when school staff are dealing with coronavirus is no small challenge. He has already been vocal about the need for better protection for staff who care for vulnerable pupils and the children of keyworkers, particularly after a NASUWT survey found that almost a third didn’t have adequate soap and hot water in their schools.

He is also deeply critical of the “outrageous

and insensitive” approach of schools that have pressed on with redundancy and disciplinary proceedings, despite the pandemic. He believes the government needs to be more prescriptive, rather than leaving decisions up to individual schools and academy trusts.

“The freedom and flexibilities agenda is, frankly, for another time and another place, if indeed it has any merit at all,” he says. “But at a time of national crisis, government needs to be clear about what employers should be doing. Fragmentation of the education landscape certainly hasn’t helped to deal with a national crisis.”

Roach says that “tens of thousands of enquiries” from concerned teachers worried about how their schools are dealing with the outbreak have allowed him to provide evidence of “unacceptable management practices” to ministers. But his concerns about the move over the past decade to provide more autonomy to schools go far beyond coronavirus.

“All schools are effectively seen as captains of their own ship and therefore can determine their own policies, whether that’s about teachers’ pay or working conditions, in a way that they see fit. Quite honestly, there is some good practice out there, but there is also a huge amount of chaos.

Profile: Patrick Roach

And that chaos has contributed to one of the worst teacher recruitment and retention crises that we've seen in a long time."

Like most of the other union conferences that were due to take place this spring, NASUWT's annual gathering was cancelled because of the pandemic. Had the event gone ahead, Roach says, teacher wellbeing and mental health would have been top of the agenda.

While he has concerns about the extent of school autonomy, he believes teachers have too little. "The day-to-day reality for ... too many of our members is one in which they are not trusted, in which they're controlled to within an inch of their lives. That has a profoundly negative impact on their health and wellbeing."

Concerns about teacher wellbeing are common among education unions, and the other organisations that represent school staff will undoubtedly hope that Roach's election will lead to more joined-up working. In recent years, as other education unions have moved to work more closely, NASUWT has often stood alone.

The union campaigned against school funding cuts, but not as part of the joint School Cuts coalition. Its logo was notably absent from the government's landmark teacher recruitment and retention strategy. And it opted not to put its name to joint union guidance on coronavirus.

Roach insists there is "no policy position" against working with other unions, pointing out that NASUWT is a "proud" member of the Trades Union Congress and happily works with other unions during local disputes "wherever it's possible to do so".

"As far as I'm concerned, the strength of the NASUWT is our closeness to the issues and the priorities of our members," he says. "That's what has to drive us first and foremost. Where those priorities of our members coincide with the priorities of other unions, we absolutely will explore opportunities to work together. But our members, frankly as far as I'm concerned, will come first."

For many who support professional unity between education unions, NASUWT has for some time been the missing link. When the



"There is no policy position against working with other unions"

National Union of Teachers and Association of Teachers and Lecturers merged in 2017 to form the National Education Union (NEU), Keates was quick to quash any notion that NASUWT would do the same. Those hoping for a change of heart following her departure are likely to be disappointed.

Like his predecessor, Roach believes in "strong unions" – note the plural – and points to health as an example of an industry in which many unions work well together. "We have a multiplicity of health unions. We have unions that are affiliated to the TUC, we have big unions that

are not affiliated to the TUC. It doesn't actually undermine the power and strength of those unions within that sector.

"At a time when the public has rallied behind the workforce in that sector, it's because of the spirit of those unions working together ... not obsessed with issues about structures and so on, but being prepared to work together in a common endeavour in the interests of their members."

Does this mean there will be no merger with the NEU on Roach's watch? He accuses me of asking a "leading question".

"My starting point is what our members tell us, what our members want for the union. That will guide me, that will guide our national executive ... at the moment the big issues are the issues that are impacting on members' health and wellbeing. We've got to get to grips with those issues first and foremost.

"I'm not going to be distracted from the agenda that our members have set for us."

Opinion

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

More schools are being asked to be emergency responders in the Covid-19 crisis, but that's been the norm at Woodside for too long, says Gerry Robinson

A member of staff made a welfare check on a student today. He discovered that the family was sleeping on the floor, so he bought them all mattresses. But it was like this before Covid-19 – the crisis has simply heightened our anxieties and the level of threat.

Woodside serves Haringey, one of London's most deprived boroughs. Our children and families rely on us for far more than the delivery of the curriculum. Most have a profound understanding and direct experience of inequality. A significant number are looked-after children, on the child protection register and/or identified as being at risk – proportionately higher than most other schools, not just in London but in the UK. Most are entitled to pupil premium funding.

School closures here have been catastrophic in ways that go far beyond the loss of routines, face-to-face teaching and exam cancellations. Those are all important, but our students are grappling with issues far bigger than the shift in reality everyone else is dealing with: extreme poverty, deprivation, abuse, violence, hunger and fear on a level no one should experience.

Yet the messages are the same for them as everyone else – “we're all in this together” and “everyone needs to play their part”. How desperately insulting to suggest this has ever been the case. Our children have long lived with the pre-existing condition of staggering deprivation.

The predictable truth is slowly becoming more evident: lower-income households and vulnerable



GERRY ROBINSON

Headteacher, Woodside High School, north London

We should be angry for our communities, not at them

populations are bearing the brunt of Covid-19. Intensive care data shows that 35 per cent of critically ill patients are from black or ethnic

minority backgrounds. People whose work is deemed to be ‘low-skilled’ and simultaneously “essential” are treated as disposable. Our students know this brutal fact all too well.

“Lockdown is terrifying for many and a torture for some

minority backgrounds. People whose work is deemed to be ‘low-skilled’ and simultaneously “essential” are treated as disposable. Our students know this brutal fact all too well.

To combat this messaging – to encourage students to have aspirations and self-belief when everything around them tells

Powerful voices are admonishing people for the rising death toll when all the evidence suggests that key decisions were taken too late – or not at all. Thirty thousand ventilators were meant to be procured; 30 were delivered. This is the situation our students have been living in their whole lives – trying to exist on a



metaphorical single ventilator and being shamed, blamed and locked up for turning to gangs or other routes to survive.

And now they are being demonised for spending time in public spaces. Haringey faces acute challenges around overcrowded housing. Temporary bedsits and homelessness are the norm. Sleeping on the floor in a tiny flat with leaks and mould is the least of it. Domestic violence and safeguarding reports are rising daily. The consequences of lockdown are terrifying for many and a torture for some.

We have been shielding people from the indescribable cruelty of our students' lives. The intersection of social work, mental health and child protection services that should exist between schools and external agencies has been eroded as those services have been decimated.

Schools have become a frontline service. Woodside runs a foodbank. None of us entered education to do that. We do it willingly, but we are not politicians or campaigners. We are teachers. We are a school. Our students ask us daily when they can come back, desperate to return to their “other home” where they learn, are inspired, have dreams, play and laugh. But also eat, be safe, receive counselling, support, clothes, shoes and a warm, nurturing environment. They beg us to tell them when it will be normal again.

Speaking on behalf of everyone at Woodside, we don't want it to go back to normal. This crisis has revealed that there is plenty to be angry about, but children playing in the park is not one of them.

Opinion

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

Lockdown diaries – a week in the life of...



JONNY UTTLEY

Chief executive officer, The Education Alliance Multi-Academy Trust, East Yorkshire

Monday, April 13

A bank holiday Monday like no other. Rather than golfing at the Belfry as has become my Easter tradition, my day starts with WhatsApp updates on the numbers of pupils attending our six schools. Today we have the smallest numbers since lockdown began – 35. But that means 35 key workers can go to work. At the start of this we thought about how we could maintain momentum and staff morale when the work we are doing feels so alien. Each day we report how many key worker shifts we have enabled to remind ourselves that what we are doing really matters. Today we've hit 700.

Tuesday, April 14

The news is dominated by the frustration of school leaders at the failures of the DfE's free school meals scheme. Schools have been "closed" for 17 days. That's 17 days that some families have not had access to school meals or vouchers. School leaders have been several steps ahead of the government on this and many other issues. Our own plan, initiated on Wednesday

March 18 (the first day that some of our schools were partially closed), started with staff members visiting supermarkets, buying vouchers and delivering them through doors. At least we know that no pupil in our trust has gone without.

There is confusion too about whether the department will fund the scheme we've been running during Easter. If it isn't, we plan to send an invoice!

Wednesday, April 15

My director of HR tells me that she feels staff are anxious that schools may go back early. A key

“Our schools have become hubs of community support

part of my weekly communication with the trust has been to try to reduce anxiety. It is always harder to get important messages across a group of schools than in one school; it is doubly difficult when doing it remotely. The last thing we need is people inside government or elsewhere floating unfounded



claims. We need to get this one right, recognising the important role schools will play in exiting the crisis, but making sure school leaders are at the forefront of decision-making.

Thursday, April 16

The lack of a normal routine is a real challenge. Having enjoyed reading and building a model of Old Trafford with my daughter – the silver lining of lockdown – I am now looking forward to Monday and hope it will bring back the strong sense of purpose we had before the "holiday". An email lifts

violence. I ask what else we can do and within minutes my amazing team jumps into action to create gift bags for the women at the centre. It is a welcome reminder of the good that we can continue to do.

Friday, April 17

I should stay off social media during a "holiday"! Today I let myself be triggered by the launch of a new group promoting the expansion of grammar schools. Politics aside, whoever thinks a national crisis is the right time to propose widespread system reform – when schools are collectively doing some of the most important work they've ever done – really is deluded. Much more fun is #MeAt20 on Twitter where you post pictures of your younger self. I put up a fresh-faced, curtain-haired boy who was naïve and clueless about what he wanted to do. All he knew was that he wanted to make a difference. Amid the weirdness of this week, I have never had a stronger sense of the difference my teams across all our schools are making.

my spirits. We have repurposed our schools as hubs of community support, manufacturing face visors, collecting toiletries and treats for NHS staff, and donating supplies to the elderly. Some of our donations have gone to Women's Aid in Hull, an organisation on the frontline of the spike in domestic

Reviews

RADIO REVIEW

The revolution will not be memorised

Tom Bennett, founder ResearchED, DfE behaviour adviser



Tom Bennett is underwhelmed by a hotch-potch of futurist platitudes in the first episode of Alex Beard's *The Learning Revolution*, BBC Radio 4

A little learning is a dang'rous thing," wrote Alexander Pope in the 18th century. "...drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring." People writing about education often remind me of this. Once in a while someone looks at formal, mass education and asks, "Hey, is this the best we can do?" And often, in their breathless quest to reinvent education, they imagine they are the first to do so. In reality they are more than 100 years late to the party.

Alex Beard is one such pilgrim and *The Learning Revolution part 1: Knowing* is a perfect starry-eyed example of the genre. It asks many excellent questions that are worth considering: What is knowledge? How do we use it? Whose knowledge? And so on. But asking smart questions isn't enough, and this programme fails to do anything more than run excitedly around the art gallery pointing at a famous painting before racing off to the next.

This creates a blurred, disjointed journey through the philosophy of education. The argument isn't so much built as snuck in at the end of a confusing flick through the encyclopedia of education. Beard barely considers what knowing something might actually mean

before deciding it must mean lots of different, shiny things. For something so central to the programme's concept, we get a very thin noodle soup without the noodles. There's a cursory nod to the boring old idea that knowing something might mean actually knowing it in your head (Christodoulou and Birbalsingh pop up like hostages chained to the radiator), before we dash off into breathless speculative futurism and novelty.

While doing so, Beard fails to challenge anything that is said; apparently merely stating something to be true makes it so, which is ironic considering the subject matter. Some of the ideas it platforms are interesting, but seem tangential: apparently because we can offload facts (ie write them down or store them somewhere for later reference), that's good enough to qualify as a "new way of knowing". Which, if you take it to its absurd conclusion, means that I "know" everything if I know where to look it up. This is a great obfuscation of the reality that I really don't know it at all, I just know where I can find it out.

But what it misses most of all is that these questions have been asked for centuries – specifically since the end of the 19th century – and answered with the same vague, feel-good conclusions. *The Learning Revolution* seems to be reaching for a refocus on skills, cooperation, critical thinking, and all the other usual suspects. We need to "learn

how to care". We need a "new relationship with the environment". Is this a reboot of schools or society? The line seems slyly blurred. We need to "know others..." and how to "...co-operate and care". Schools don't teach this? That will be news to the many educators who do exactly this – or try to.

And, of course, Covid-19 is shoehorned into this smorgasbord of 19th-century philosophy reheated as 21st-century innovation, to prove that which is already believed. We need new ways of knowing to defeat it, and future perils, apparently. But perhaps we don't. Perhaps we just need lots of children, carefully educated to understand a vast array of the best of what we already know, for them to develop the skills to innovate, create and build the future – as they always have done. That won't be achieved by pretending we're teaching children things directly (eg creativity) if it means we neglect the tools they need to achieve them.

This was an interesting, but deeply superficial piece of advocacy dressed up as investigation. One day someone who is already aware of the decades of work that precedes them will attempt to reimagine education. But this is not that day.

The Learning Revolution is available on BBC Sounds. Next week, episode two, Teaching, will be reviewed by Melissa Benn

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Forget School

Author: Martin Illingworth

Publisher: Independent Thinking Press

Reviewer: Daniel Whittall, geography teacher, Trinity Sixth Form Academy, Halifax

This could be a timely book. *Forget School* appears at a moment when its vision of digital education has become a necessity. Yet while teachers are learning quickly about edtech's strengths and weaknesses, Martin Illingworth's vision that it might reconfigure schooling appears to have run aground on the jagged rocks of reality.

The author believes that bricks and mortar schools will disappear, perhaps within 30 years, and envisions a technoutopian education system in which students will sit in cafés or meeting rooms compiling online portfolios. Rather than study subjects, they will complete projects in fields such as "contemporary studies". There will be plenty of public speaking to build confidence and creativity, and each portfolio will be linked to a computer chip inserted into a student's body that uploads data on food and drink purchases alongside health indicators.

Illingworth is frustrated that today's schools deny the internet a place in the classroom by refusing to embrace digital technology. His future schools will emphasise skills (procedural knowledge) over "information" (declarative knowledge). Why teach information when it is readily available online?

The future will be a different world, with jobs we haven't yet imagined. Confidence and skills will set young people apart, rather than the knowledge they've managed to store in their

memories. Illingworth suggests that schools have failed to move with the times; they are trapped in an outdated mode of organising learning.

If this sounds like a vision of an educational system drawn up by tech-savvy entrepreneurs, that's because in large part it is. Illingworth says that his interviewees, all aged between 20 and 30, are "working for themselves or are in the process of moving from paid employment to self-employment".

These interviewees at times undermine Illingworth's case. For example, although he argues against the teaching of discrete subjects, nearly 60 per cent of those he spoke with list being passionate about a subject as their top reason for going to university. He mentions this in passing, but doesn't dwell on the implications for his argument.

He has undoubtedly set his sights on some real problems. He's right to argue that there are issues with a system that rests so much of its authority on exam results, and with that an increasingly competitive

ethos that sets schools against schools, subject departments against subject departments, and even individual teachers against individual teachers. This does no good,

neither for students nor for the wellbeing of staff.

It's concerning, though, that his vision appears to mimic much of modern capitalism's most rapacious sector. This is the presumed inspiration for a vision of education that places the perceived virtues of flexibility and choice at its heart; that believes that learning can be freed from the need to remember things because all is fleeting, in constant flux.

Many other authors have tackled how digital technology might alter education, notably Daisy Christodoulou in *Teachers vs Tech?*. Illingworth engages with relatively little of this literature. A productive counterargument has recently been advanced by Gert Biesta in *Obstinate Education*. For Biesta, those who suggest that the rise of digital technology means schools' days are numbered are advancing an argument that "takes the global competitive economy – ie global capitalism – as its unquestioned frame of reference". As a result they see the role of education simply as "making students ready for this 'reality'". Education, Biesta argues, has a duty to resist such a role.

Illingworth opts instead to acquiesce.

Given the opportunity to use technology for their work and free themselves from the constraints of pen and paper, many students are reacting negatively to distance learning. And that's saying nothing of all those without access to it.

But when did reality ever get in the way of utopianism?



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is **Robin Conway**, director of research and innovation at John Mason School

@JMSREFLECT

Generating "centre assessment grades": the challenges

@Framheadteacher

The heavy burden of responsibility on teachers and schools to provide "centre assessment grades" for each student is one no teacher can be unaware of. I have come across a number of good pieces reflecting on this. However, this piece from Andy Byers stood out for its balance, thoroughness and clear sense of moral purpose. The first third of the blog offers analysis of some trends in results for his school from recent years. This is well worth reading as it pins down issues we are all thinking about. It also provides an effective analytical model and builds to conclusions we should all consider. In the second part of the blog, Byers goes on to consider thresholds, over-prediction, under-prediction and his initial plans to approach this momentous task. As Byers notes, the system will be far from perfect but it "is the least-worst option" and if everyone approaches it with the same care and thought modelled here, it will help a lot..

TOP BLOGS of the week



What's wrong with Oak National Academy @dmthomas90

Oak National Academy launched on Monday 20th April. The spirit of generosity and proactive response to the lockdown behind this project is something I have found greatly heartening. Here, principal, David Thomas gives a little context to the pressure under which the team members were working as they planned to launch the resource hub within six working days. He recognises the key development points the team will be working on going forward but also gives a good insight into their aims and sense of mission. Thomas notes that "Oak won't change the world. It's not supposed to revolutionise teaching. We just want to make life a little bit easier during one of the most difficult periods in our lifetimes." As a mission statement and reflection on the work they have done, I think Thomas may be erring on the side of humility with this piece. It is a wonderful introduction to an incredible and inspiring initiative.

Recruiting better: lessons from lockdown @adamboxer1

Another issue on many people's minds during lockdown is that of recruiting new team members remotely. In this blog, Adam Boxer notes the pressing need for

schools to continue recruiting through this period. With two places to fill and interviews about to start before schools were shut his team were forced to think about this almost immediately. They developed a well-thought-out process replacing the lesson observation with a carefully-planned interview that unpicked the thinking behind a detailed plan. Boxer generously shares the long list of discussion questions they generated along with other useful advice and concludes that this model has some strengths over the standard model "even in non-pandemic times... because of the insight it gives you, as well as the technical advantages". Whether recruiting during lockdown or when schools re-open, this piece is worth your time.

The next edu-revolution: textbooks! @teacherhead

The demands of remote learning have led a lot of teachers to look at resources with new eyes. Many have not proven easy to adapt to supporting absent students, with solutions offered from all quarters. (Like many others I have mastered technological innovations in the past few weeks that I would previously have run from, screaming.) However, Tom Sherrington reminds us of an old standby that should perhaps never have fallen out of use: the textbook.

He strongly argues that we should reconsider investing in them and his key features of a good textbook will make a handy guide to selecting any new resources. He explores the reasons for the decline in the use of textbooks and how we might reverse the trend.

I am not entirely sure that he gives online textbooks quite the credit they deserve, but I cannot disagree with his conclusion that we should "train teachers to use textbooks well, to link a curriculum plan to good texts and give the books the funding prioritisation they deserve".

Research

This week, our guest research reviewer is ASPIRES project team.
Contact them on Twitter @ASPIRESscience - if you have a topic you would like them to cover

Why students value science, but don't want to be scientists

Louise Archer, professor of sociology of education, UCL Institute of Education

Students say they learn interesting things in science and think that scientists do valuable work, but very few want to pursue careers in science or engineering.

Over the past ten years, the mixed-methods ASPIRES study at UCL has been investigating science and career aspirations, following a cohort of young people from age 10 to 19. The study is informed by more than 650 interviews with students and their parents, and more than 40,000 surveys with young people.

Our research has revealed that these aspirations are relatively stable over time. That is, similar percentages of students we surveyed at age 10-11 who said they would like to be engineers or scientists would still like to be engineers or scientists by age 17 or 18. We also found a considerable gap between interest and aspiration – while 73 per cent of young people at age 10 and 11 and 86 per cent of those aged 17 and 18 agreed that they learn interesting things in science, only 16 per cent of 10 to 11-year-olds (and 12 per cent of 17 to 18-year-olds) aspired to a career in a related field.

In recent years, we've been able to identify several key factors that shape young people's science identities and aspirations. The factors are complex and multiple and can be grouped into three key areas – capital-related inequalities; educational factors and practices; and dominant educational and social representations of science.

Capital-related inequalities include the impact that "science capital" has on the extent to which a young person experiences science as being "for me" or not. Science capital can be thought of as a conceptual holdall that encompasses



all of a person's science-related knowledge, attitudes, interests, participation outside of school and science-related social contacts and networks.

Evidence shows that the more science capital a young person has, the more likely they are to aspire to and continue with science post-16 and the greater the likelihood that they will identify as a "science person".

Teachers, careers education and school gatekeeping practices also have a big impact on young people's science identity and trajectories. For example, restrictive entry to the most prestigious routes such as "triple science" at GCSE means that even many interested young people can find it difficult to continue with science.

And when it comes to educational and social representations, associations of science with "cleverness" and masculinity have also been found to restrict and narrow the likelihood of a young person identifying and

continuing with science post-16. These stereotypes impact particularly negatively on female students, students from lower income backgrounds and some minority ethnic communities. While they impact on all the sciences, they are a particular issue in physics.

Based on the study's findings, we have a number of recommendations for changes to education policy and practice. For instance, rather than just inspiring and informing, interventions can be more effective when they are longer term and focus on building science capital. In particular, changing everyday science teaching practice has a far greater positive impact on young people's engagement with science compared with trying to change young people's minds about science. Interested teachers and schools can access free resources, including the science capital teaching approach, by contacting us at the addresses below.

Our work is ongoing, but we already have a wide range of articles and resources to share. If you'd like to download any of the ASPIRES reports, or find out more about our research, please get in touch with us.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

SATURDAY

As headteachers continued to tear their hair out over the never-ending meltdown of the national free meal voucher scheme system, it emerged the Welsh government has scrapped thoughts of developing a similar scheme.

Instead, they will leave it up to local authorities to ensure that vouchers are delivered to parents, insisting councils are actually best placed to do this.

No idea at all why the Welsh government might have been put off.

SUNDAY

Gavin Williamson got his first chance to run the show at the Downing Street press briefing, and he relished the opportunity.

Flanked by deputy chief medical officer Jenny Harries, the education secretary thanked all those keeping schools open.

He also apologised directly to those whose education has been disrupted.

But he spent a large chunk of the briefing having to play down reports that the government is drawing up plans to reopen schools as early as May 11.

The revelations, in the Sunday Times, somewhat eclipsed Williamson's big reveal on free laptops.

Poor Gav. Oh well, at least leaked information hasn't caused him any troubles before...

MONDAY

What do you do if you've made a promise you can't keep? Simply delete the evidence that you ever made the promise in the first place, of course.

Guidance from the Department for Education on its free laptops scheme, first published on Sunday, stated that applications would open on Wednesday.

But it seems this was a little too specific for the department, which took that line out during an update to the guidance today.

Somewhat sneakily, the DfE didn't announce the change at the time, explaining the updates simply added clarification on "who digital devices and internet access will be provided to" and "the role of responsible bodies in ordering digital devices for eligible children and young people".

Funnily enough, Wednesday came and went, and the application process did not open.

TUESDAY

Celebrations erupted this week as Aldi joined the national free school meals voucher scheme. Many heads questioned why budget brands like Aldi and fellow German chain Lidl were absent from the scheme, while upmarket shops like M&S and Waitrose were included from the start.

However, it seems supplier Edenred and the DfE didn't quite manage to compare notes properly before the announcement was made. Vicky Ford, the children's minister, proudly announced that £11m worth of vouchers had been created via the scheme, while Edenred said it was £15 million.

WEDNESDAY

You don't find many examples of Conservative ministers drifting to the left, but Vicky Ford certainly seemed to be on the move during the first digital education committee meeting.

MPs grilled the children's minister via video link this week. At one point, chair Robert Halfon had to ask Ford to move her camera so she was in the centre, after

she appeared to start to move towards the edge of the screen.

The hearing gave us all a taste of what's to come. Ofsted chief Amanda Spielman and education secretary Gavin Williamson will appear next week.

With its inspections suspended, Ofsted proved this week that it is more than willing to join in with the Twitter bantz.

Following a growing trend of people tweeting their own amended Ofsted grade signs for their home-schooling programmes, the inspectorate got in on the act.

Responding to one mocked-up report, which branded leadership and management at the "Jeffrey Home School" as "shocking", Ofsted said: "Monitoring visit showed excellent leadership skills in difficult circumstances. Our admiration and thanks to all parents and children keeping it together."



Andrew Jeffrey @AJMagicMessage · 22 Apr
Despite rumours they were on furlough, we just had an unannounced visit from @Ofstednews.

It didn't go as badly as we'd feared. Here's the summary report.

#HomeSchooling during #COVID-19

School report			
Jeffrey Home School			
Kitchen table, N. Brighton			
Inspection dates		Number on HSE: 2	
April 2020			
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection: This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires Improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Shocking	3
Quality of teaching		Requires Improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires Improvement	3
Early years provision		Not Applicable	-
Summary of key findings for parents and pupils			

195

1K

5.1K



Ofsted @Ofstednews · 22 Apr
Dear Headteacher. Monitoring visit showed excellent leadership skills in difficult circumstances. Our admiration and thanks to all parents and children keeping it together.

18

55

826



'Academies in Christ'
Part of the Archdiocese of Southwark



VACANCY: ACADEMY PRINCIPAL (FULL-TIME)

Grade: L22-L26

St Edmund's is a Catholic secondary academy and part of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership (KCSP), a multi-academy trust (MAT) established by the Archdiocese of Southwark for Catholic education across Kent. Currently a MAT comprising 24 academies (5 secondary and 19 primary), KCSP wishes to appoint an inspirational and dedicated Academy Principal from August 2020 due to the promotion of the current post-holder.

Reporting to the Executive Principal, the Academy Principal will be responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the academy and will lead a team that strive together for children under the academy's motto of "love, equality, justice, reconciliation, mutual respect and service."

The successful applicant will take the lead role in ensuring inspirational Catholic education based on our shared Gospel values. They will be seen by students, parents and carers, and the wider parish as the person directing their learning, and as the academy's pastoral leader. We are therefore seeking to appoint a practising Catholic to this role.

St Edmund's is an inclusive academy. Its dedicated staff, helpers and Governors work hard to ensure that every student is supported and challenged to be their very best. In an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and care, the St Edmund's team works together in the spirit of the Gospel to serve the local community, wider parish and the Diocese as a whole. Through mutual respect, responsibility and self-discipline each individual is encouraged to grow spiritually and intellectually, so that unique and positive contributions can be made to society and the world.

St Edmund's is a 4FE secondary academy located in Dover, serving the Parish of the Good Shepherd, Dover, the Dover Deanery and the local area, and enjoys spacious classrooms, large grounds and excellent student facilities. Its most recent denominational inspection (December 2019) judged it as 'Outstanding'. Its most recent Ofsted inspection (May 2019) judged the academy as remaining 'Requires Improvement', though it was graded 'Good' for effectiveness of leadership and management, and for personal development, behaviour and welfare. HMCI, Amanda Spielman, wrote that she was, 'delighted to read that Inspectors felt that leaders' passion for improving pupils' lives was inspiring' and that it was reassuring to see, 'with the support of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership...a range of improvements including to teaching, learning and assessment and to middle management'.

St Edmund's and KCSP are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and require all staff, helpers and Governors to share this commitment. Offers of employment are subject to an enhanced disclosure and barring service check and section 128 check.

Please visit our website at www.kcsp.org.uk to view the full job description and person specification and to download an application form and all of the related documents. If you would like an informal discussion, please contact Executive Principal, Mike Walters, on 07974 220838.

Please send your letter of application together with a completed Catholic Education Service (CES) Application Form, completed CES Recruitment Monitoring Form, CES Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 Disclosure Form and CES Consent to Obtain References Form to Mike Walters at: mwalters@kcsp.org.uk

Your letter of application should be limited to 1,000 words max. and should outline why you are suited to this role, what you believe you can bring to the academy and also your experience to date, skill set and qualifications.

Closing date for applications: Friday, 1st May 2020

Shortlisted candidates to be notified: **by Friday, 8th May 2020**

Interviews will be held during the week commencing: **Monday, 11th May 2020**

ST-EDMUNDS.COM

EDU WEEK JOBS

Coronavirus Cover Roles

Education organisations are seeking to fill the following emergency cover roles:



EM Skills CIC	SEN Teacher	Colchester
EM Skills CIC	Volunteer Online Teachers - English, Maths and Science	Home Based
The Open University	Functional Skills Tutor-Assessor (Online)	London
The Open University	Functional Skills Tutor-Assessor (Online)	West Midlands
The Open University	Functional Skills Tutor-Assessor (Online)	South Coast
The Open University	Functional Skills Tutor-Assessor (Online)	North East
The Open University	Functional Skills Tutor-Assessor (Online)	South Yorkshire and Derbyshire
Finchale Group	Teacher/Lecturer	Durham

For more information and to apply, please click here

We are offering free advertising for emergency cover roles at education organisations that are staying open to support key workers.
To advertise a role, please click here

Advertise