

# SCHOOLS WEEK

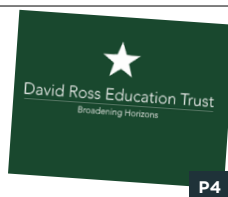
A digital newspaper determined to get past the bluster and explain the facts.



School reopening plan 'next week'



Major trust first to furlough staff



Ofsted keeps controversial survey findings secret



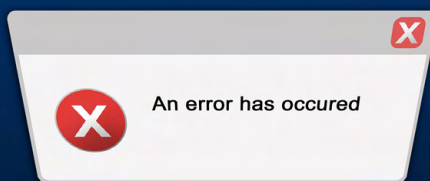
## How are we going to thank our school staff?

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THE SCHOOLS WEEK

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# SCHOOLS WEEK

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# Full-pay furloughs announced for DRET staff

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Dozens of staff at one of England's largest academy trusts are to be furloughed on full pay, Schools Week has learned.

The David Ross Education Trust, founded by millionaire Tory donor and Carphone Warehouse founder David Ross, claims it is only furloughing staff "whose roles are funded by the external income that we rely upon to fund a range of areas".

However, a source claimed that members of core staff, including those working in human resources, operations, IT and reprographics, are also affected, even though those jobs would traditionally be paid-for with government grant funding.

When this claim was put to DRET, the trust did not confirm or deny the roles were included, and would not provide Schools Week with a full list of roles affected.

Schools and academy trusts are continuing to receive their government funding as normal during the coronavirus crisis. Under the terms of the government furlough scheme, schools are not allowed to furlough staff whose salaries public money "could typically be considered to fund".

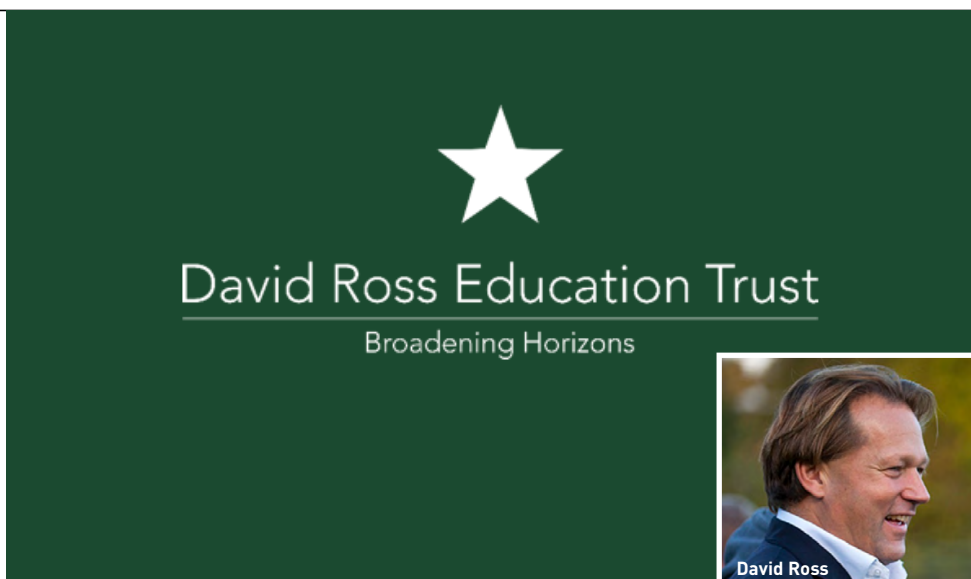
However, the government has confirmed that state schools with private income streams, such as catering, sports facilities lettings or boarding provision, can furlough staff associated with them.

A spokesperson for DRET said the trust had lost income from sources not associated with its annual grant from government.

According to the trust's latest accounts, it made around £2.6 million from "other trading activities" in 2018-19, and £187,000 from boarding.

"The trust's loss of income from non-GAG sources resulting from the Covid-19 crisis is significant, and so, well within the parameters of government guidance – and having taken legal advice – we are furloughing a small proportion of staff whose roles are funded by the external income that we rely upon to fund a range of areas."

Examples of these areas given by the trust include its enrichment programmes, wrap-



around support, site management and "other provision".

DRET is thought to be the first high-profile trust to take advantage of the government's furlough scheme under the private income stream criteria.

Losses of private income for state schools are not covered by the government's cost-reimbursement scheme.

Stephen Morales, chief executive of the Institute of School Business Leadership, warned last month that lost trading income was "of particular concern to schools that require non-grant income to prop up their budgets".

DRET said it had taken the step "in order to protect jobs in the medium term and prevent the redundancies that would have been necessary as a result of the loss of income resulting from the Covid-19 crisis".

"In line with the guidance, no teachers have been furloughed as part of these arrangements and our focus at all times has been on protecting jobs."

DRET has also confirmed it is topping up the government-funded portion of the furlough scheme to 100 per cent. Under the rules, organisations can only claim back for 80 per cent of employees' salaries, up to £2,500 a month.

In a letter to affected staff, seen by Schools Week, the trust attempted to reassure them it was "no reflection of you or your valued role within the trust, but rather an essential reduction to revenue-funded key roles for the duration of this closed period".

"We want you to be assured that any measures

put in place during the coming weeks and months are to safeguard the future of the trust and as far as possible the continued employment of its valued staff members, so that we can return to normal operation as soon as possible."

The chain also claims to only be furloughing "less than five per cent" of its staff. It had over 1,800 employees as of last August.

DRET runs 35 schools, mostly in the East Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber.

In 2018, it was warned by the Education and Skills Funding Agency that it was "vulnerable", following a review of its finances. It had a forecast deficit of £4.9 million as of June 2017, and officials raised concerns about "limited revenue funds".


In response, the trust introduced a shared service for academy back-office functions and pooled school budgets. Accounts show the trust had a deficit of £1 million as of last August.

Earlier this year, trust CEO Rowena Hackwood told staff at DRET they should treat "every penny" of funding as if it was their own and apply the same "discipline" to financial management as they do to improving educational performance.

According to the trust, the furloughing will cover "less than a third of the trust's external funding loss".

The trust said: "The remaining loss will be covered by non-staffing cost reductions and prudent financial management, which has become the trust's norm as it resolves its historic financial challenges. Prior to Covid-19, the trust was on track against its budget, with a view to delivering a second year of in-year surplus."

## News



## Voucher scheme: 'We've still got challenges'

**JOHN DICKENS**  
@JOHNDICKENSSW

The government still faces "some challenges" over its national free school meals voucher system, admits the education secretary, despite the scheme now entering its fourth week.

A *Schools Week* investigation last week revealed potentially hundreds of thousands of families were left hungry as the scheme was overwhelmed by demand.

Questioned by MPs about the system, labelled a "fiasco" by school staff, Gavin Williamson said there were still "some challenges" in allowing schools to "rapidly" place and access their voucher orders.

Edenred, the company that runs the system, also admitted that "some school and families have faced long wait times when using the site or uncertainty about when eGift cards will be delivered".

School staff and parents are still reporting that it takes hours to log on to the website to order or check on the status of vouchers. They also say Edenred is not responding to emails about problems or answering a dedicated helpline number.

*Schools Week* understands a large academy trust emailed and called the company on Monday to offer staff to help answer the phones or process orders. It did not get a response.

Edenred would not say how many staff made up its customer service team, but claimed it was able to deal with more than 90 per cent of queries raised via email. It said the "team is ensuring every email is responded to with clear guidance on the day it is received, in many cases almost immediately".

*Schools Week* revealed last week that the Department for Education had not responded to offers from Wonde, an edtech company, to

help ensure families in poverty were receiving vouchers. Wonde currently delivers vouchers to 4,000 schools.

In a letter sent to the DfE last week, seen by *Schools Week*, Wonde said it had "several calls" with officials about its capability to "provide help immediately" at "no cost".

Peter Dabrowa, Wonde's chief executive, said in the letter: "Every hour matters in this crisis and families are clearly being affected by not receiving vouchers in reasonable timescales, if at all. This is not a time for any government department to turn down help from companies who can rapidly respond."

Williamson did not answer when MPs asked him on Wednesday why his department ignored the offer.

But he said: "I readily acknowledge that the level of demand for this has been exceptionally high and we've had some big challenges in terms of being able to provide schools with the level of service that we would have really wanted them to see."

The government said it was "only paying for the face value" for the vouchers.

Edenred would not comment on the specific commercial arrangements, but *Schools Week* understands that its income is derived from taking a small percentage on each voucher.

*Schools Week* has been told the industry norm is about 4 per cent a voucher, but it is understood Edenred's slice is below this.

As of Wednesday, Edenred said more than £35 million worth of voucher codes had been redeemed, with more than 15,500 schools placing orders.

The Edenred spokesperson said the company would like to "thank each and every person who has faced issues in the process of ordering codes and eGift cards for their patience", adding it would "continue to improve our systems to better manage the high demand".

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## Exam plan for home-schooled pupils

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**  
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Private candidates such as home-schooled young people will be allowed to transfer to another exam centre after concerns they faced missing out on grades.

Calculated grades will be awarded this summer following the cancellation of exams. However, exam boards can only issue results for pupils if their school believes they can properly produce a centre-assessment grade and rank order.

In most cases, private candidates do not have a relationship with the school that is listed as their exam centre – they just attend the centre to sit the exam.

Recent press reports have said private candidates could miss out on grades as some schools did not feel confident enough to issue scores.

In this case, Ofqual had said youngsters could take exams at a future date, such as this autumn.

But exam boards will now allow for "some private candidates to transfer to another centre, ahead of the grading process this summer, if the centre where they had registered decides it cannot submit a centre assessment grade".

"In this case, some other centres, such as those with experience of working with distance learners, may be able to work with some more of those private candidates who need a grade this summer in order to progress."

In updated guidance, the boards have also set out alternative sources of evidence a school or college might consider if they do not have enough evidence about a students' attainment.

Work produced independently – for example under the supervision of a family member or tutor the school does not know – should not be relied on unless "centre validation has taken place".

Validation includes remote mock assessments or a declaration signed by the youngster that the work is their own.

Ofqual said students should talk to their exam board for information about working with a new centre.

# Confusion as examiners learn of Covid-19 furlough plans

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

An exam board is furloughing some of its examiners, but offering others a £250 one-off “goodwill” payment instead.

Cambridge Assessment, which owns exam boards OCR and Cambridge International, is the first organisation to tell examiners of its pay arrangements in light of exam cancellations this summer.

Whether the boards can use government help to pay examiners’ wages is expected to impact any rebate schools may receive on the exam fees they’ve already paid.

Last week, Cambridge Assessment examiners whose work is not needed were either offered furlough or an ex-gratia taxable payment of £250.

Cambridge Assessment told Schools Week that the payment was higher than the sum examiners would have earned if they had been put on furlough.

But those examiners have expressed disappointment about the offer, claiming that it is much less than they would have earned this year.

The email setting out the offer from Cambridge Assessment also seems to have caused confusion among some examiners. It stated that examiners were being offered an ex-gratia payment because the “amount you would receive through the scheme would not be sufficient for you to participate”.

There are no lower earning limits on eligibility for the scheme.

An examiner with Cambridge International, who earned around £2,000 last exam season, said: “We are all navigating unknown territory with this pandemic. But to send an email with no explanation other than ‘we think this is the better option for you’ and then to put a five-working-day deadline on a response – and not have the means in place to contact people who have questions as a matter of urgency – is beyond me.”

“It adds to people’s anxiety and uncertainty about their finances. Something nobody needs in this current time.”

Cambridge Assessment said it had followed the government’s guidance on furlough, which states that employers can claim for the higher of either: the amount an employee earned in the same



month last year, or an average of an employee’s monthly earnings from the last year.

The furlough scheme runs until the end of June.

Schools Week understands the ex-gratia payments will be funded by the exam boards, not the government. But Cambridge Assessment did not comment on this.

Confirmation that its examiners qualify for furlough follows weeks of uncertainty.

However, the three other main exam boards, AQA, Pearson and WJEC, are still working on their arrangements.

There is also still confusion in the sector. For instance, guidance on the National Education Union website suggests that since most examiners are self-employed, they could benefit under the self-employed income support scheme.

Employment arrangements also seem to vary by exam board. Pearson examiners are on short-term contracts, while at WJEC they are independent contractors.

Jane Hallas, head of education and solicitor at employment law and HR support firm Ellis Whittam, said there are potentially three employment statuses – self-employed, employee and worker.

Employees or “workers” would have to have been on the payroll before March 19 this year to qualify for furlough.

For the “limb b” worker status, “the awarding



Jane Hallas

body would have to get their agreement to be furloughed and designate them as a furloughed employee”.

She added: “All employees are also workers, but not all workers are employees. A worker may, in certain circumstances, be classed as an employee if they meet certain conditions. This is a complex area of law and so advice should be sought. It is quite a minefield.”

A Cambridge Assessment spokesperson said they had been writing to examiners “to explain our understanding of which of them may be able to access the UK Government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and in other cases what support we can offer them.”

They added any assessment specialists with questions about their individual circumstances should get in touch on the examiner helpline.

# £85m free laptops scheme fails to meet demand

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

School leaders have lambasted the government's free laptops scheme after some were allocated a fraction of the number they were expecting.

Some academy trusts have been given an initial allocation of less than a fifth of what they need - and leaders say conflicting messages from the government have left them fending off demands from desperate parents.

Earlier this week, Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, revealed that the government's £85 million scheme would pay for about 200,000 devices, the first of which he hoped would reach pupils by the end of next month.

However, school leaders have already encountered problems ordering the devices, less than a week after it went live.

Councils and academy trusts - so-called "responsible bodies" - are given an initial allocation based on the number of eligible pupils in their schools and a DfE estimate of how many of those will not have access to appropriate devices.

These responsible bodies can state how many of each type of device they need before they are given a final allocation.

But some leaders fear they won't get what they need, and it is unclear how they can request more.

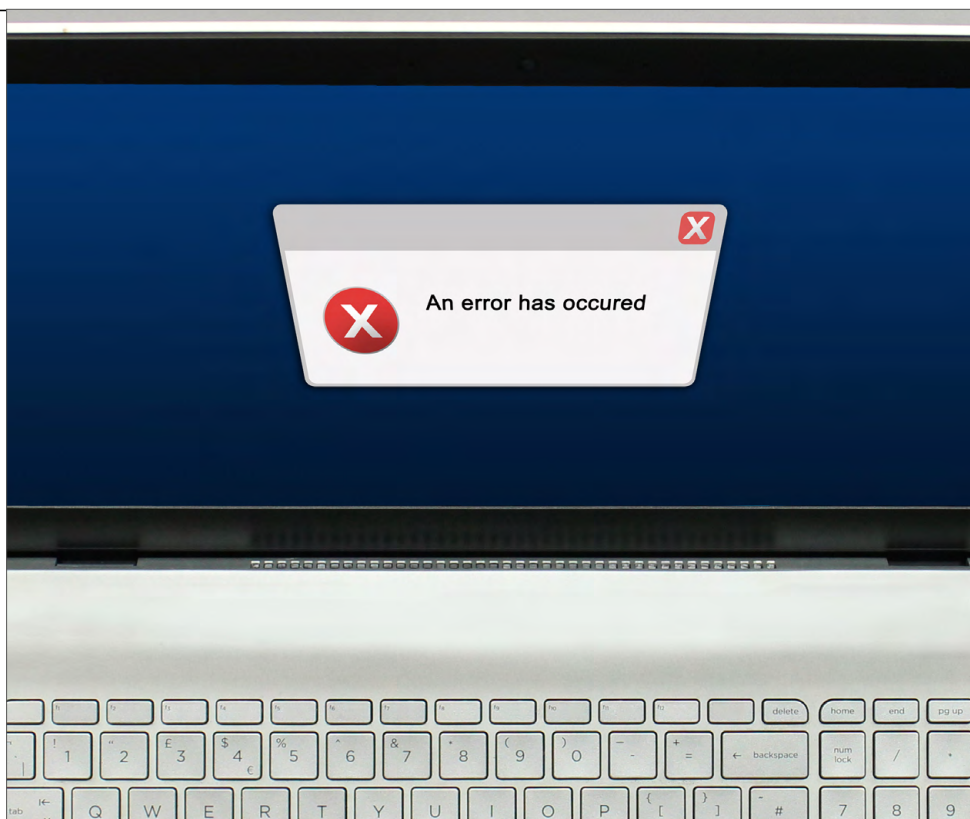
Longdean School in Hertfordshire has 66 pupils in year 10 who are eligible for the pupil premium, but was allocated just 21 laptops by email from the DfE's chosen supplier, Computacenter. The school has been told it cannot order more.

"It seems to be about grabbing the headlines with something that sounds good, and then not really following it up," said Tracy Doyle, the finance director at the school's single-academy trust.

"And we're the ones in the middle, dealing with the parents' expectations, which are reasonable expectations."

An email to trusts from Computacenter, seen by *Schools Week*, tells them they will be given "a fixed number of laptops and tablets".

This will be based on "the number of eligible children and young people for whom you



are responsible and who the Department for Education has estimated do not have access to a device through other means".

After receiving their initial allocation, trusts were asked to fill in a "forecast survey", which the department said it would consider when making final allocations.

However, the email also said that "it is important that you do not order above that quantity in the ordering process for your responsible body".

Karen Hayler, the chief finance officer at the South Downs Educational Trust, which runs Worthing High School, said her school had been offered ten laptops, despite having 34 disadvantaged year 10s, and given no instructions on how to challenge the allocation.

The problems come as leaders and business managers struggle with the system for ordering free school meals vouchers for disadvantaged families.

"I think for us, with the free school meals and with this, because they're communicating it publicly first, it's raising an expectation within families, understandably, and then we're not able to deliver on that expectation," Hayler said.

"I've had at least six or seven emails from parents ... saying 'where is the laptop'. And we can't

answer them."

Farmor's School in Gloucestershire has been allocated three laptops, despite having more than five times that number of disadvantaged year 10 pupils.

"I was going on the basis that the aim of the scheme seems to be to mitigate disadvantage where it's most needed, and obviously that has to be quite carefully targeted," said Matthew Evans, the school's headteacher.

"I had imagined that the free school meal figures would play a significant role, because if someone is on free school meals, it's a fairly safe assumption that expenditure on IT equipment is not high on the list of priorities."

Evans said the school would challenge the allocation, although he was "not hopeful".

"If the initial formula has generated just three laptops, I don't imagine that we're going to be able to get anywhere near the level that we were hoping to get."

A DfE spokesperson said the department had "already placed a mass order for all young people eligible for a device".

"If organisations feel their allocation is insufficient, they should contact the department setting out their additional need."

## News



## PM will reveal back-to-school plan next week

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Prime minister Boris Johnson has promised he will set out a "comprehensive plan" next week to explain how "we can get our children back to school".

Johnson, speaking at the daily briefing yesterday, said that "for the first time we are past the peak of this disease. We're on the downward slope."

He added: "I will be setting out a comprehensive plan next week to explain how we can get our economy moving, how we can get our children back to school, back into childcare and third how we can travel to work and make life in the work place safer."

It comes as education secretary Gavin Williamson said pupils are expected to return to school "in phases". But he reiterated to the education select committee that no date for reopening had been set.

Schools have been closed by the Covid-19 outbreak since March 20 to all but a small number of vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers. Data released by the Department for Education this week shows attendance rose to 1.9 per cent (177,000 pupils) last Wednesday, following rates as low as 0.9 per cent during the Easter holidays.

Reports about the end of social distancing and conflicting messages in the press about the lockdown have increased pressure on the government.

Sir Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour party, said he was concerned about growing

inequalities between disadvantaged pupils and their better-off peers.

A research review by academics at the University of Exeter and London School of Economics found school closures could leave disadvantaged children with a "learning loss" of up to six months. The Northern Powerhouse Partnership, backed by 55 MPs and peers, has called for a "catch-up premium" for disadvantaged pupils once the lockdown lifts.

However, unions say schools must not reopen until it is safe.

It follows warnings from Professor Jonathan Van Tam, the government deputy chief medical officer, that it would be "very difficult" to maintain social distancing of young pupils.

A YouGov poll revealed that 44 per cent of teachers were stressed and anxious about what might happen during the summer term, while 46 per cent were worried about the new school year.

Earlier this week the government's top medical expert warned that reopening schools too early could increase the spread of infection.

Professor Chris Whitty said that although school closures were "only one" of the government's measures, it still had an impact on the infection rate or "R-value" of the virus.

"If you close schools, the R goes down. It's part of the collection of things that were done in March to try to pull the R from where it was, near 3, to where it is now, below 1.

"It's only one of [the measures]. If you did it on its own it wouldn't be enough, but if you stop doing it, you would actually lose some of the benefit that we've currently got."

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## Say thanks in the most creative way you can, urges campaign

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER  
@SCHOOLS WEEK

A national campaign is urging pupils and their families to get creative and thank the school stars who are "working tirelessly in incredibly difficult circumstances".

Thank a Teacher, launched this week, aims to celebrate staff who go above and beyond.

Using the hashtags

#HowWillYouSayThankYou and

#ThankATeacher, pupils are asked to come up with creative messages of thanks to celebrate their teachers - by singing songs, reading poems and recording video clips.

The messages will be shared across the country on Thank a Teacher Day, on Wednesday May 20.

Steve Munby, the chair of the Teaching Awards Trust, which organises the campaign, said the day was "our way of thanking all the amazing teachers, lecturers and other staff working in our schools, who are working tirelessly in incredibly difficult circumstances to give their students the best possible education".

"We have already heard countless stories of teachers and staff who have gone well beyond their duties, and I am sure there are hundreds more stories out there that we'd love to share."

For instance, teachers are making care visits to vulnerable families of coming up with innovative ways of remote teaching.

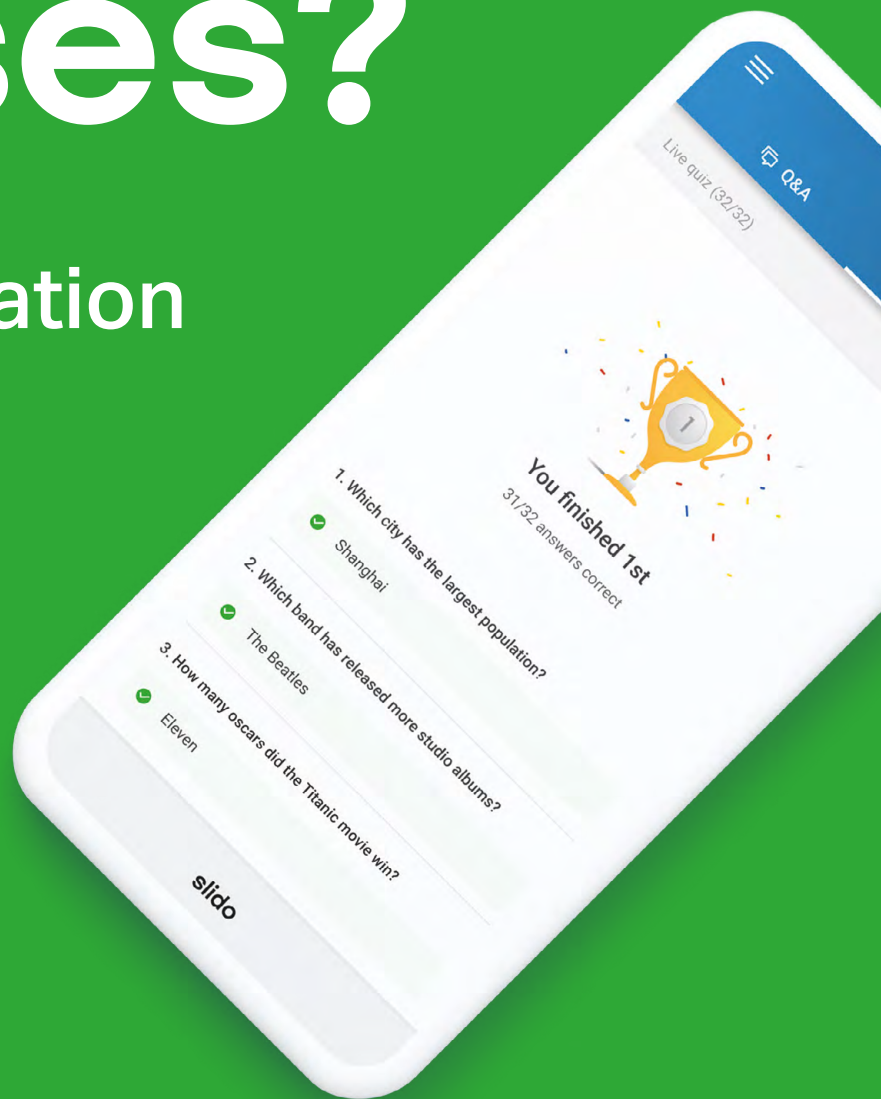
Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said:

"This year I am prouder than ever to support Thank a Teacher Day, to recognise the teachers and staff who are working so hard to ensure all pupils are supported at this time, whether in or out of school.

"I hope many adults and young people alike will join me in recording a message of thanks to the inspirational school and college staff that help shape young people throughout their education."

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# News

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## Unpaid fees should not hinder grades, says Williamson

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**  
**@SAMANTHAJBOTH**

No one should be "held over a barrel" by private schools refusing to issue grades to pupils whose parents do not pay their fees, says the education secretary.

Gavin Williamson was questioned by Robert Halfon about the alleged refusal at the education select committee on Wednesday.

The Conservative MP appeared to be referring to a column by Quentin Letts in *The Times* last week in which the journalist claimed his daughter's private school said if he did not "cough up" the £8,000 summer term fees it would not "give her any A levels".

It is understood the school is Malvern College in Worcestershire. It denied the accusation.

A spokesperson said that "pupils' grades are not linked to payment of fees" and "at no point in our communication with parents have we intimated that non-payment of fees would impact on pupils' grades". The school had reduced fees this term.

The Independent Schools Council, which represents more than 1,300 schools, said it was not aware that any candidate would not be able to enter this year's assessment.

Julie Robinson, its chief executive, said it "would never advise any school to refuse to enter a pupil into this summer's public examinations".

"It might well be that some schools have informed parents of the theoretical contractual position regarding fees. In reality, schools have bent over backwards to work with parents to ensure that children are not disadvantaged."

Halfon said some Independent schools were billing parents £8,000 for a summer term of "just two weeks of online A-level provision amid school closures".

"For children to get an A-level grade recommendation the pupils must be on the school register. To be on the register, parents must pay the fees. Is it a catch 22 situation?"

"What steps are government taking to ensure bad practice doesn't occur and private schools don't use this to capitalise on changes to exam grades?"

Williamson said it was "absolutely vital" that students could get their A-levels results. While the department had no role in the contractual agreement that private schools had with parents, he would ask "everybody to act in the most considerate and sensible" of ways.

Private schools are under pressure to stop charging fees while most children are at home. Many have reduced payments for this term, with some also offering hardship bursaries.

LVS Ascot in Berkshire has cut fees by 50 per cent, with seniors now paying £3,101 for the summer term. It is owned and managed by the Licensed Trade Charity.

But Melanie Sanderson, the managing editor of *The Good Schools Guide*, said that while the more well-known and wealthier schools could withstand the impact of coronavirus, smaller schools were in a difficult position.

"Covid-19 has presented a perfect storm that means that if parents are not able to pay fees some may be unable to reopen in September."

"Schools that can afford to reduce fees for the current term have done so, and most are working extremely hard to deliver the same rounded curriculum that the children would have received remotely, including PE and even extra-curricular activities."

*The Bury Free Press* reported that Moreton Hall Prep School in Bury St Edmunds is to close at the end of the summer term after the school became "unsustainable".

## Getting together on price fixing 'breaks the law'

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**  
**@SAMANTHAJBOTH**

The competition watchdog has told private schools that they must not collude over price fixing during the coronavirus outbreak, a leaked letter reveals.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) wrote to the schools on April 17 saying it had "become aware that . . . some schools may be engaging in discussions with each other" about the level of discounts and refunds on fees.

The letter, shown to *Schools Week* by the Private School Policy Reform group, accepted that increased collaboration might be necessary in a crisis.

But it added: "However, this does not give a 'free pass' to businesses to engage in non-essential collusion, even where such businesses are charitable in nature."

The CMA said it would not tolerate independent schools agreeing prices or exchanging commercially sensitive information on future price fixing or business strategies "where this is not necessary to meet the needs of the current situation".

"Such behaviour would almost certainly infringe competition law."

However, the Independent Schools Council (ISC), one of the organisations that received the letter, said it knew of "no evidence" that schools were sharing information. The matter had been "resolved amicably with the CMA".

Julie Robinson, its chief executive, said private schools were "trying hard to understand the best way of offering reductions or rebates to support parents during these difficult times".

The CMA said that any school found to have fixed its fees could be fined as much as 10 per cent of its turnover.

In 2006, its predecessor, the Office of Fair Trading, found that 50 fee-paying independent schools broke competition law by "exchanging specific information regarding future pricing intentions on a regular and systematic basis".

Each had to pay a penalty of up to £10,000.

Robinson added: "We are grateful for the CMA's timely reminder, which is entirely in line with the advice the ISC and its constituent associations are giving members."

# Investigation

## Did the government take its eye off the ball on pandemic planning?

**JAMES CARR**

**@JAMESCARR\_93**

In 2008, the DfE produced detailed guidance on how to continue learning if schools closed due to a pandemic. But when Covid-19 hit, the government stood accused of being unprepared to ensure youngsters can learn at home. So, what happened?

**T**welve years ago the government published a plan of action to be taken by schools and local authorities to deliver learning should a pandemic close schools for an extended period. It was produced in part as a response to the outbreak of SARS, and was updated in 2009 following the outbreak of swine flu. The warning was that a pandemic is “considered inevitable” but “no one knows when it may be”.

The plan set out actions schools and councils needed to take to continue learning during school closures. It included checking that pupils had home access to learning materials and the availability of online platforms for them to use.

Though distributed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), it was based on guidance from the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency, also known as Becta. The body, which promoted technology in schools, predicted “by March 2010 all schools are expected to be using a learning platform”.

But when the pandemic did hit this year, department officials were left scrambling to draw up initiatives. So, what happened in those intervening years? Schools Week investigates.

### The bonfire of the quangos

Becta was the first quango to be axed by the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition in 2010, with acting education secretary Michael Gove announcing it would be wound down within a fortnight of him taking office.

Under Gove's and advisor Dominic Cummings' so-called “bonfire of the quangos”, the agency was lost – along with those policies that underpinned the pandemic plan.

Among many other projects, the agency oversaw the implementation of online learning



### SUPPORTING LEARNING IF SCHOOLS CLOSE FOR EXTENDED PERIODS IN A FLU PANDEMIC

DCSF guidance:  
Issued November 2008 (Annex 1 updated September 2009)

spaces for schools. As part of the government's Building Schools for the Future programme, its website provided guidance on how schools would implement learning platforms and set minimum standards for ICT that all contractors involved in BSF projects must meet.

Additionally, its Home Access Programme provided laptop and internet connections for over 260,000 disadvantaged pupils.

The decision to cut the agency saved £80 million a year and was welcomed by some who

felt it was too inflexible and had failed to keep up with trends. Instead, schools and local authorities were given control over what to purchase.

Jonathan Simons, an education policy adviser for the government at the time, said there was a feeling decisions on IT were better taken by headteachers. The shift in thinking also fitted with the government's push to academisation – sold on giving more freedom to the profession.

“There wasn't really a need for what was a relatively expensive IT agency making these decisions on a national basis, as it was probably more efficient for schools, trusts and local authorities to make their own decisions,” Simons said.

The agency claimed it did offer value for money. According to its now defunct website, between 2002 and 2010, it spent £1.5 billion on procurement agreements – saving an average £28 million a year compared with schools procuring technology independently.

### The changing landscape

The 2008 guidance assumes “as learning platforms are adopted in schools ... the level of access from the home increases”. It also links to Teachers TV – a service that offered direct access to professional development materials and teaching resources. This was also scrapped by the

**Continued on next page**

# Investigation

coalition government.

There was additionally the problem that the pandemic guidance, which stated the “overall responsibility lies with local authorities”, was becoming outdated. The explosion of academies under Gove meant many schools were no longer accountable to councils. Schools and local authorities were no longer held to the same uniform account. Simons explains that, as with IT, it was felt that disaster protocols were better undertaken by headteachers and councils.

In keeping with this, the DfE’s guidance also became less prescriptive. In 2014, it released an emergency planning and response guidance for schools and local authorities, which advised a plan “should be generic enough to cover a range of potential incidents”, including “public health incidents (e.g. flu pandemic)”.

However, the advice mainly focuses on actions to take during severe weather conditions, rather than delivering learning from home for an extended period.

Furthermore, in 2013 the Cabinet Office released guidance for pandemic flu planning with advice from a range of departments. The section on “education/childcare” stated the guidance was “currently under review and a link to revised guidance will be provided in the near future”. Seven years on, it still doesn’t appear that any links have been added.

Professor Marilyn Leask of De Montfort University claimed the government had “taken its eye off the ball”.

## So where did this leave schools?

Critics have said without government prescribing specific technology standards, some schools have fallen behind and their ability to cope with a crisis has been hindered.

Niel McClean, a former executive director at Becta, said: “Schools’ capacity got lost in this, they were left by themselves. Some of the things that I was responsible for, such as learning platforms, fell off the agenda because there was no one to keep them on the agenda.”

A survey conducted by Teacher Tapp in the immediate wake of school closures found a quarter of teachers in the poorest communities believed that at least one-fifth of their pupils did not have adequate access to a device for online learning at home.

“Ten years ago the education system was being geared up for a digital future...all those things



were stripped out,” said Bob Harrison, a school and college governor who previously sat on Becta’s advisory board.

“Technology can be a real equaliser if used effectively. On the other hand if those things are not in place it can be a huge accelerator of disadvantage.”

Simons said it was “reasonable to point out now there hasn’t been anything to replace it [the guidance], and in retrospect, this kind of planning should have a higher type of priority than it did.”

But the DfE said it had “taken the right steps at the right time” during “an unprecedented global pandemic”.

A spokesperson added: “We have committed over £100 million to boost remote education, providing devices and internet access for vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and supported the creation of Oak National Academy to deliver video lessons for every year group from reception through to year 10.”

But, taking Oak National Academy as an example, it was created by teachers who had spotted gaps in provision across the sector, with some schools unable to provide decent learning provision for their homebound pupils.

The hub was also built at breakneck speed, in just 10 days.

Elsewhere, the government’s £85 million project to provide free laptops, tablets and dongles for some disadvantaged pupils was launched a month after schools closed.

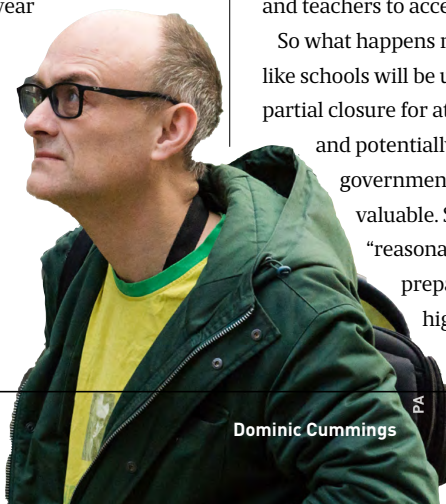
The first batch of laptops won’t be delivered to youngsters until the end of May – with the majority being delivered in June.

Ty Goddard, who chairs EdTech UK and is involved in the department’s edtech demonstrator schools scheme, praised the government’s reaction to the crisis. But he did question the preparedness, for instance, highlighting that Wales and Scotland both already had centrally funded online learning platforms for schools.

He said: “Can we learn from what others have done? Did the creation, years ago, of the Hwb in Wales and Glow in Scotland, support pupils in efficient use of online resources, digital platforms and teachers to access professional learning?”

So what happens moving forward? It looks like schools will be under some sort of full or partial closure for at least the next few months,

and potentially longer – meaning the government’s resources will still be valuable. Simons added that it’s a “reasonable bet that this kind of preparatory work will now take a higher priority across all areas of government policy”.



Dominic Cummings

## News

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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# The BIG Schools Quiz: how to take part

## SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

Fed up of lockdown? Fancy getting that brain back into gear? Want to nerd out with some other education folk?

We're excited to announce that the first ever Schools Week Big Schools Quiz will take place on Wednesday (May 6).

Hosted by former national schools commissioner Sir David Carter, the quiz is all about bringing the sector together for a bit of laugh, and to raise money for charity.

We're also hoping to have one or two special guests on the night. The rounds will mostly be about education, but we will have some general knowledge, too.

The winner will also get a fancy Microsoft Surface Laptop 3 (worth £1,000!), thanks to our event partner Pearson.

There's no entry fee, we simply request all participants make a donation to our chosen charity, Centrepont (suggested donation £5).

Only those that have donated will be eligible for prizes.

### Can we play in teams?

You can enter as a solo entry or organise a team of great minds!

On the night you will be able to let us know your team name. You will need to arrange your own team and method of communication for the evening and select one person from your team to submit answers.

We suggest you create a WhatsApp group or use software such as Zoom to collaborate on the night.

We'll send out further details about this to all registered

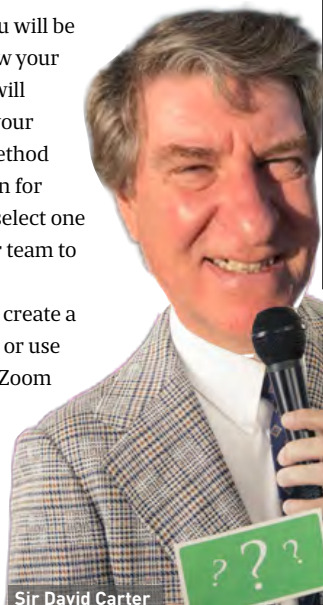
participants before Monday.

Please note that each member of your team will need to register to view the broadcast on the night.

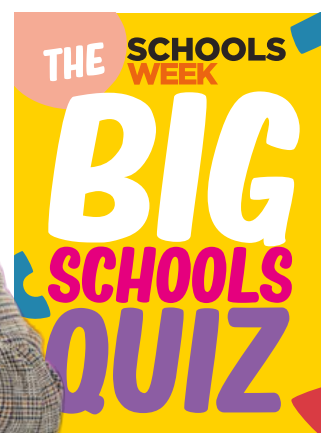
We suggest that teams should be four people max (there will be countdowns on answering the questions so communicating in larger teams will be difficult).

Places are limited, so you'll need to [sign up here to take part](#).

And here's our [Just Giving page](#) where you can donate:



Sir David Carter



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**THE**

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# **BIG SCHOOLS QUIZ**

SUGGESTED  
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**£5**

**DATE: WED 6 MAY**

**TIME: 7.30 – 9PM**

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## News

EXCLUSIVE



# £1.5m leadership programme only for knowledge-rich

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Ministers want leaders of 'outstanding' schools to replicate their success by designing new training programmes – but only those with a knowledge-rich curriculum will be considered.

The Department for Education is in the early stages of developing a £1.5 million "exemplary leadership programme", *Schools Week* can reveal.

In a pilot, at least two schools will be given up to £250,000 a year for three years to develop "bespoke" programmes for other leaders.

However, details of the scheme state that successful applicants will have to "reflect a knowledge-rich curriculum, direct instruction and a strong focus on behaviour management".

Leaders must deliver training based on this approach, the tender document says.

Steve Munby, the former head of the National College of School Leadership, said: "This looks less like a 'profession-led' approach to school leadership development and more like a 'minister and officials-led' approach to leadership development."

It is not the first government programme to restrict participation to those schools with approaches favoured by ministers.

In 2018, *Schools Week* revealed that access to the DfE's curriculum fund would be available only to schools with a knowledge-rich curriculum.

A DfE spokesperson told *Schools Week* the programme would "support leaders in some of our most successful schools to develop training for other school leaders, with a view to improving the quality of school leadership, teaching and pupil outcomes across the school system".

The offer will be targeted at schools and

leaders "most likely to benefit from such training and development", based on a "willingness to embrace different methods and by aligning with other departmental initiatives".

Providers will also be asked to "clearly monitor" the impact of the programme on behaviour "and the impacts on pupils in their schools". They must also share learning with the department "to enable us to adjust our wider leadership offer in the future".

Munby said the profession needed to learn from "the better leaders in the system". Small-scale pilots could be useful "if we use a test and learn approach".

But he added: "We know from all our experience of [national leaders of education] work and other research that you can't just transplant one approach easily into another school, especially if the senior leadership and governance of the school doesn't change."

The announcement comes during a government review of system leadership. The DfE paused recruitment of national leaders of education last July, and is focusing increasingly on its teaching school hubs programme.

Nick Brook, the deputy general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said it was "unclear" how the new programme would fit with other things going on. He also questioned the focus on 'outstanding' schools.

"The outstanding grade is often as much a reflection of the location of the school as the quality of education provided. Many exceptional individuals work in schools not rated outstanding. In fact, leaders in these schools probably know more than most about what works and the necessity for exemplary leadership."

The tender states the size of individual grants will depend on the number of participants in each project and the administration costs expected.

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## Outbreak 'pauses' work on academy without a trust

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER

@SCHOOLSWEEK

A controversial academy conversion has been halted because of the coronavirus outbreak.

But the government says the "temporary pause" at Moulsecoomb primary school in Brighton is not part of a wider stoppage.

Baroness Berridge, the academies minister, said this was to "give both the school and the council the space to focus on immediate Covid-19 priorities".

The Department for Education said the decisions to pause conversions were made on a case-by-case basis. Some were continuing.

The Local Government Association (LGA) wants all conversions suspended to allow council staff to concentrate on "essential work".

It said conversions needed staff to work on transferring personnel, assets and financial agreements. Nearly 600 were in the pipeline.

Berridge said one of the reasons behind Moulsecoomb's pause was the "depth of unease" in the local community.

It also follows New Horizons trust stepping away from the school.

However, she said she was "encouraged" that the regional school commissioner's team had been planning "to bring together the governing body of the school, and local authority officers, to discuss next steps in how we might identify an academy sponsor to provide school improvement".

She was "keen" for the department and local representatives to "work together in a spirit of collegiality".

The conversion discussions would be picked up "as soon as it is appropriate to do so", she added.

The school was rated inadequate in April last year. A monitoring inspection in February found leaders' work to turn the school around was hampered because "at times, the headteacher has had to devote his energies to dealing with matters related to the academy order and the restructuring of staffing".

# Ofsted

**Ofsted chief inspector Amanda Spielman appeared in front of the parliamentary education committee by video link this week. Here's what we learned.**

## 1 Routine inspections unlikely before summer

Spielman is "not expecting to be asked to resume full routine inspections before the end of the summer term".

As revealed by *Schools Week*, Ofsted paused all routine inspection activity in mid-March, following a decision by the government to increase measures to tackle coronavirus.

Schools closed to most pupils just days later.

Spielman said it was too early for her to say how any return to routine inspections might work, but insisted inspections would play a more important role once they resume.

"We're going to have a year where there are going to be no tests and exam results, so there is going to be more weight, not less weight, put on the outcomes of Ofsted visits," she said.

"I think it's very important that parents aren't left completely in the dark."



## 2 Ofsted will 'look at' deferral policy

Spielman said it was "impossible" for her to say how long schools will get before they are inspected once inspections resume.

Asked how inspections would be run if pupils' return is phased, she said: "We have so little certainty about the kind of phasing that we might see, that it is impossible for me at this stage to say 'no inspection until...'"

"It's simply too uncertain at the moment."

The chief inspector said Ofsted's deferral policy, which allows schools to delay inspections under certain circumstances, was "always under review".

She said that "of course we'll want to look" at the policy in the aftermath of coronavirus, and at when it will be "sensible and proportionate" to consider delays.



## 3 Schools won't be inspected on COVID-19 response

Asked whether Ofsted will be looking at how schools have responded to the coronavirus crisis, Spielman said: "We're not going to be judging schools per se on their response to Covid-19."

Once inspections resume, they will once again be focused on the quality of education, Spielman said.

She added: "There is no standard of home or online learning by which we would be able to judge schools."

"We wouldn't be asking for evidence of what you set children. There would be no 'prove that you set children meaningful work'."



## 4 'Serious' concerns about impact of closures on vulnerable pupils

Spielman told the committee that she was "seriously concerned" about the impact of partial closures on the most vulnerable pupils, for example, those in alternative provision.

"The longer the closure or almost closure, the greater the problems for those children," she said.

The chief inspector added that Covid-19 "is clearly going to present the biggest problem for the poorest, the lowest achieving academically and the least motivated children."

"Whether we like it or not, it is going to widen gaps, especially in the short term."



## 5 Many Ofsted staff are 'less than fully occupied'...

Ofsted has a "considerable number" of staff who are "less than fully occupied", but Spielman said her staff were "very willing" to do other work.

The inspectorate had surveyed all of its staff during the first week of the lockdown to work out if they had additional skills to help elsewhere, and these details were passed to other government departments.

Asked how many staff are volunteering for other work, Spielman said: "Our default assumption is that everybody who is not required for the business-as-usual work or redeployment to...other departments is available for wider work."

Matthew Coffey, Ofsted's chief operating officer, told the committee that over 230 Ofsted staff are now working with councils, with a focus on those rated 'inadequate' and those that have not improved since their last inspection.



## 6 ...But there 'isn't demand' for help in schools

Despite the availability of Ofsted staff, Spielman claims they are not needed in schools.

She referred to polling by Teacher Tapp, which showed that more than half of teachers are working "much less than usual".

"There isn't demand from the school sector at the moment for additional support," she said.

"We are absolutely open and responsive to all initiatives but the general reaction from schools at the moment, and it might change when they reopen, but at the moment is that there is not a perceived need by schools for additional capacity."



Ofsted

# Ofsted refuses to release full survey results

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted has refused to release the full findings of post-inspection surveys under its new framework, claiming they would be “potentially misleading”.

This is despite its own publication of some of the findings last month that showed nine in ten school staff were “satisfied” with their inspection.

Publication of the positive figures followed growing criticism of the watchdog’s new curriculum-focused inspections. Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, claimed the published “snapshot” – the results of selected questions to staff – showed the dissenters were a “small and vocal minority”.

But when Schools Week, under the freedom of information act, asked for the full survey results, Ofsted refused. It said releasing data for the first five months of the new framework would be “inappropriate” and “potentially misleading”.

Stephen Tierney, the chair of the Headteachers’ Roundtable, said the refusal was “ridiculous” and questioned Ofsted’s “motive in releasing partial data rather than the full data set”.

Tierney, a vocal critic of the inspectorate, added: “Releasing the data will not be ‘potentially misleading’ – the data is what the data is – but would allow for a fuller debate around the newly imposed framework”.

Before Covid-19 halted inspections, Ofsted was under fire from influential academy trust leaders who claimed the new framework favoured



Amanda Spielman

middle-class children.

At an event on March 7, Spielman referred to the then unseen survey figures and said she didn’t think the “ratio of positive to negative is coming through”.

On March 12, the snapshot – based on three questions – was published online, just days before the chief inspector was due to face school leaders at the Association of School and College Leaders’ annual conference.

The figures showed nearly nine in ten respondents agreed they were satisfied with how the new inspections were carried out, that their report was clear, and that feedback given by inspectors would help the school improve.

Just 7 per cent disagreed with the statement they were satisfied with the way the inspection was carried out. No further breakdown of the findings

– for instance how responses varied by the grade issued – were released.

The results were based on survey responses between September 1 and February 29.

Ofsted justified its refusal by saying it intended to prepare and release a wider set of survey data “in the future”, although it did not confirm when this would be.

Schools Week’s request for the past academic year’s survey was also refused.

For this year’s survey results, Ofsted said “it would be inappropriate and potentially misleading to release incomplete statistical data part-way through the academic year”.

The response added that the first set of inspections “may have been prioritised for reasons that influence responses to the surveys” and that “responses may also be impacted by an inspection being carried out early in the academic year”.

The response read: “The data would be incomplete and not directly comparable with survey responses for the full academic year of 2018-19. We are satisfied that to release a partial

set of data in this way would be potentially misleading and would prejudice our inspection function.”

It would not comment when asked why this did not apply to the March snapshot.

Tierney added: “The inspectorate having released partial data – in what it terms a transparency snapshot – should do the decent and reasonable thing and release the full data set it has available without delay.”



Stephen Tierney

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## Prosecutors ‘waking up to illegal school problem’

Prosecutors were “not entirely enthusiastic” about taking illegal schools to court in the early days of a government clampdown, says Ofsted’s chief inspector.

Amanda Spielman told the education committee on Monday that lawyers were “waking up to the scale and seriousness of the problem”.

But the Crown Prosecution Service said that prosecutions could only be brought “where there is sufficient evidence, and it is in the public interest”.

Four illegal schools have been prosecuted, despite hundreds of referrals to Ofsted’s illegal schools’ taskforce.

However, Spielman said she was “cautiously optimistic that things have been happening”, and that she was “very much hoping that legislative changes will come about in the not too distant future”.

In February, the Department for Education launched a consultation on plans to legally define full-time education. If its proposals are passed, settings attended by pupils for at least 18 hours in a seven-day week would have to be registered.

Ofsted’s response to the plans has not yet been published, but Spielman told MPs that “all the main things that we’ve been concerned about would be addressed if the proposals in

the consultation are taken forward”.

Of 618 referrals received by Ofsted as of January, 174 were for general education settings and 171 were for alternative provision.

Cath Murray, the alternative provision lead at the Centre for Social Justice think tank, said the government’s proposals did not “go far enough”, and that “all providers where any child attends for at least two full days within school hours should be registered and subject to pre-opening checks and regular inspections – albeit on a reduced version of the inspection framework”.

The consultation closes on May 8.

# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Could government have been more prepared for a pandemic?

The Coronavirus crisis has revealed that schools were just not equipped for home learning.

As leaders put in the extra hours to set up virtual schools so those pupils not attending can still learn, so too has the government hastily drawn up plans to ensure all pupils can learn at home.

Should schools have been better equipped for home learning? We're not really sure.

This certainly isn't a criticism that plans weren't in place. But, what's interesting, is that 12 years ago it appears a quite detailed plan was in place.

We attempt to unpick what happened in those intervening years in our long-read investigation on pages 10-11.

Again, we don't attempt to criticise decisions made – nor make a judgment on whether they were right or wrong.

But while we now look to a new future for schools, it may be there are some lessons to learn from the past.

Meanwhile, in those hastily-put-together plans the government has put in place – some flaws are emerging.

As we report this week on page 7, headteachers say the promise of free laptops for poorer pupils is coming up short.

The pledge won headlines across national media, and was picked up by parents. But now the details are emerging, schools are finding there aren't enough laptops for all their disadvantaged pupils.

This is causing another headache for headteachers as they prepare to tell parents there aren't enough laptops to go around.

The department said schools who feel their allocated number of laptops comes up short can make the case for more.

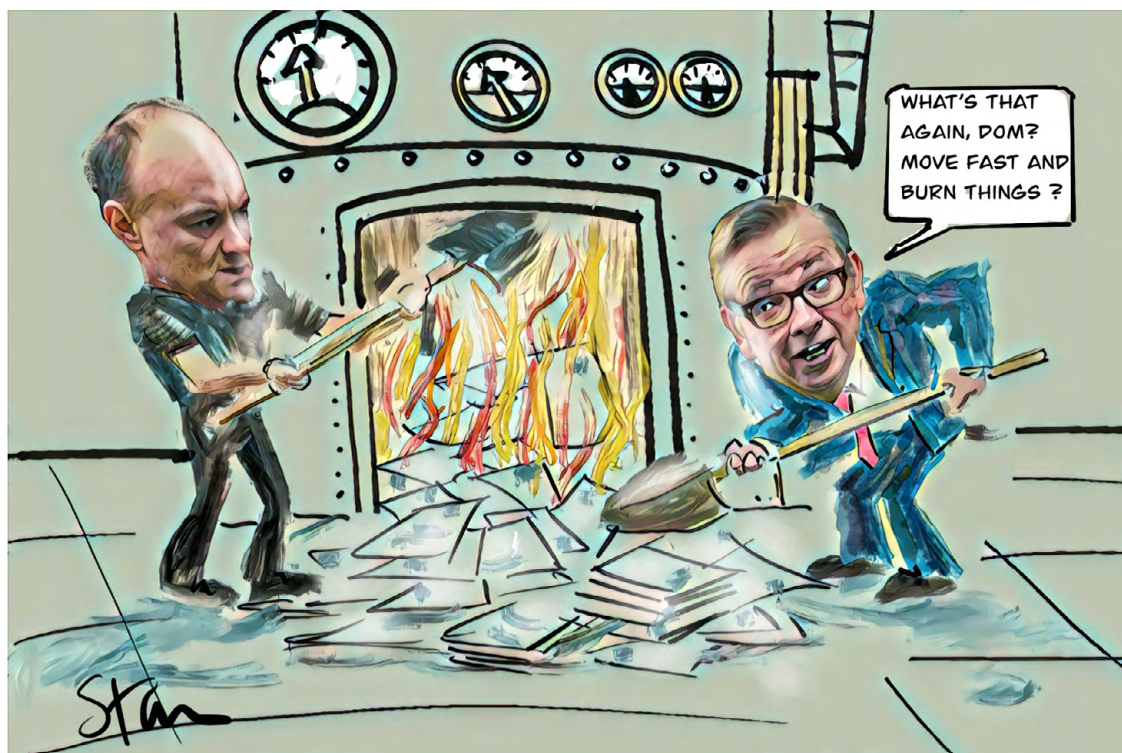
But school staff aren't holding their breath – particularly after the ongoing problems caused by the government's national free school meal voucher scheme fiasco.

**SCHOOLS  
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## How the government's free school meal voucher scheme is leaving children hungry

### Alan Glover

It's useless, it tells me I have £60 then I click on Asda and all I get is info "re a gift voucher". We can get by, but I feel really sorry for the families that are genuinely struggling, with children at home and not enough food in the house. The Department for Education is letting these children down once again. Is it not about time somebody in government did the job they are paid for? I doubt that any of their children are going without.

### Kirsty Mullen

I've had two vouchers so far – all was fine until today [Monday] when I tried to put my code in: told it's wrong [and] I've been trying since 9:05am this morning. No help to try fix this from anywhere. Not on when I need to get food for my son.

### Julie

I have been waiting for vouchers for what is now the fourth week for my two children at high school. The school have been amazing trying to sort this out and spending hours in the queue. It's a failure. Maybe the government needs to buy the cards already stored with the money in from the retailers and send to the families?

### Fran Overbury

We have fallen through the cracks in this one. We should be eligible for the meal vouchers, but because we are on tax credits, not universal credit, we are not eligible. My husband and I are currently earning nothing due to the restrictions.

## DfE spent £50k trying to hide academy chief vetting failure

### Mark Watson

Fraud happens all the time, and the public sector as a whole (be it DfE, or local authority, or NHS) are all too frequently the victim of unscrupulous people who embellish (or straight up lie) for their own benefit. This seems to be compounded by a historical trend for the public sector not taking due diligence seriously enough and taking the most basic of steps to check credentials. Unfortunately, throwing good money after bad in an attempt to hide the fact that you threw money away in the first place is worse. The attempt to avoid responsibility, and costing the public purse a pretty sum in the process, is now a bigger story than the original oversight.

## REPLY OF THE WEEK

Kym Renshall

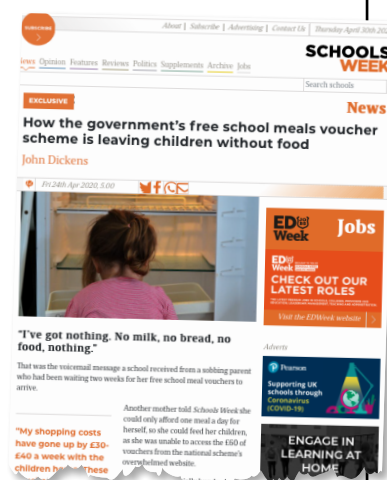
## How the government's free school meal voucher scheme is leaving children hungry

I have four children in three different schools. Last week I received vouchers for two of my children and after numerous attempts and lots of waiting and technical difficulties I got £30 worth of supermarket vouchers.

I am owed £30 from last week for my other two children.

Today [Monday] I have spent three hours on the Edenred website trying to redeem my code and get supermarket vouchers. After waiting and experiencing technical difficulties for the past three hours, I have not been able to get my supermarket vouchers.

I am home-schooling four children, have a toddler and work shifts as a keyworker. I do not need the added stress of trying to access Edenred free school meal vouchers.



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

## We should be angry for our communities, not at them

### Paul Dunning, @NorwichDDE

Reading this brings so many emotions – moved, angry, inspired, shamed. We must do better after all this. Angry for our communities is the right headline.

## Long-Bailey: lack of 'overarching message' on education contributed to Labour's defeat

### Ger Graus, @GrausGer

Labour's education vision was not coherent, didn't make sense. The election was lost because of the party's very poor leadership and its clueless stand on the European Union.

### Mel Ainscow, @MelAinscow

Labour had no obvious and realistic proposals on education at the election. Given the current crisis, not least the numbers of learners out of school and in segregated provision, there is a need for a clear set of proposals based on principles of inclusion and equity.






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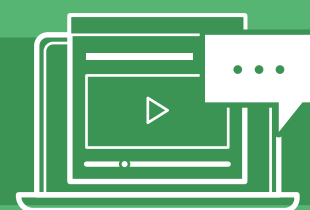
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# Feature

## The Horsham Schools Partnership

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



**“I want to make decisions based on the kids in my school. We’re a family, not a brand”**

**Jess Staufenberg discovers that when it comes to rural schools, the system helps those who help themselves**

**B**efore re-naming itself, the Horsham East Learning Partnership had an acronym which might have alarmed a marketing guru – HELP.

The 18 schools in the rural surroundings of west Sussex had joined together in a loose partnership since the mid-2000s, sharing resources, expertise and ideas. But in the last three years the group’s headteachers, who oversee 14 small primaries, a special needs school, an infant school and two secondaries, were growing anxious. In some settings pupil numbers began to fall as academy trusts were springing up in the area. HELP may have been a more apposite abbreviation than anyone wanted to admit.

“It’s not quite what we were going for,” says Helen Cobbin, partnership manager at what has for two years now been the Horsham Schools Partnership (HSP). She works two days a month coordinating heads’ monthly meetings, and supporting a number of sub-groups headed by lead teachers including curriculum, special educational needs and – thankfully – marketing. Each school pitches in around £8 per pupil a year, amounting to a budget of £47,784 last year, a tiny amount compared to top salaries in academy trusts that pays for her time and the services of a speech and language therapist and educational psychologist. A CEO she is not, but this was a deliberate choice.

“What we didn’t want was to have a CEO, with one person always driving and leading. When we decide anything, we have a majority vote.” The schools signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the first time in 2018, laying out the terms of their “soft federation” – a management structure in which schools keep their own governing bodies but, as the memorandum puts it, have “a strategic committee to oversee the work of the partnership”. That committee is chaired “on a rotational basis” by a different headteacher each term. For the first time this year, the committee has paid to launch a website, get a professional logo and put some money into marketing.

Many local authority schools are now in

## The Horsham Schools Partnership



Pupils at Colgate primary school

federations, mirroring the multi-academy trusts operating outside LAs. Since 68 per cent of primary schools remain local authority-managed, many federations involve smaller schools, struggling amid budget cuts. The Horsham Schools Partnership is an intriguing example of close-knit, family-like village schools finding new ways of working in a changed landscape – including (and especially) finding a new voice. Just this month, the National Education Union passed a resolution arguing that rural schools provide a vital service, with members calling on the government to give them “protected status” because of “their significance for the survival of their communities”.

Survival was certainly a significant part of the drive behind re-naming to HSP and getting the website up. “There had been a lot of promotion of free schools and academies that were opening nearby,” explains Cobbin. “We didn’t want our parents to lose sight of the fact that there are some very successful schools here already. We realised we should be blowing our own trumpet.”

Rebecca Winn, headteacher at Colgate primary school, said alarm bells began ringing when

she and other small primary schools in the partnership began experiencing falls in pupil rolls. “With new schools being opened around us, I knew we had to work incredibly hard to keep attracting parents to the school. My school was in a village I’d never heard of before coming here, so there was a high chance most parents weren’t aware of us.” This year, Winn dipped into the budget to pay for a magazine advert and a big banner in the middle of the village, while also doubling her open days. It seems to be paying off. Last year, she only took in 17 new children out of a possible 20. For next September, she looks set to hit the full roster.

Another reason for federating was to be more strategic about encouraging pupils to transition from primary to secondary schools within the partnership. Ian Straw, headteacher at The Forest School, one of the partnership’s two secondaries, has “worked really hard with all our primary schools to offer more transition events”, with 1,000 places now available to pupils on open days. For the other secondary, Millais School, the proportion of year 7 pupils arriving from within the partnership has risen from 90 per cent in

2018 to 93 per cent this year. But the struggle continues – at The Forest School, that proportion fell from 79 per cent to 65 per cent.

Aside from survival and necessity, more collaboration seems to have had some other positive outcomes too. One thing that’s noticeable is the lack of overly-managed press communications. The heads openly speak to me with enthusiasm for their model – particularly its balance between support and autonomy.

“What can be done with this collaboration is massive. It gives me goosebumps really,” says Winn. She describes maths conferences,



Helen Cobbin



Rebecca Winn

# The Horsham Schools Partnership



continuous professional development and attachment training days which have “fired up” staff who have been able to spread best practice around 18 schools. Cobbin, who as a former headteacher at one of the partnership’s schools is a kind of home-grown leader, remembers being “isolated and lonely” when she first started in Horsham. Now, she holds a half hour slot with coffee and biscuits for any heads wanting a chat before the committee starts “so they have a local sounding board in a safe space. That’s powerful for wellbeing.”

Cobbin also pours praise on the two secondary schools in the partnership, who pay significantly more than the smaller primaries on whom much of the support work is focused. The Forest School contributed £8,864, and Millais School £11,888, in 2018-19. “The secondary heads are brilliant – they’re prepared to sacrifice time and money because they see the primary work as beneficial to them too.”

And Straw is in fact emphatic about his support for his primary head colleagues. “Schools talk about being a family and nowhere is that more

true than these small primaries where there’s only 90 pupils. I would want to send my child to a little school like that.” The two secondaries also pitch in on the primary curriculum, so it knits up with their own. “For the vast majority of kids who come to us in year 7, we will have had an input into their learning since their first day in primary.”

Meanwhile, the model enables different faith schools to come together. Religious rules meant the partnership’s four church of England and one Roman Catholic schools couldn’t be in an academy trust together, despite being neighbours. So the soft federation model brings them together without upsetting the dioceses.

It also seems to be keeping teachers fairly happy. The schools re-sign the memorandum each year and have the option to opt out. “I wouldn’t want to be part of a multi-academy trust making decisions many miles away. I want to make decisions based on the kids in my school. We’re a family, not a brand.”

Winn echoes him. “Part of our model is we all genuinely have an identity.” Happy staff make



good marketers, it turns out.

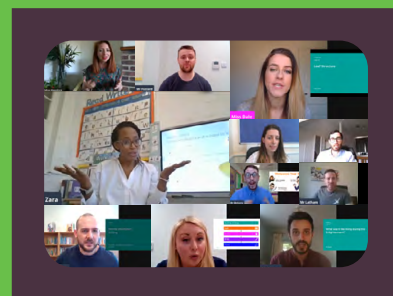
But £47,000 a year to support all the partnership work seems vanishingly small compared to hefty amounts spent on central support in larger academy

trusts. Cobbin admits that, were it not for budget cuts, she would work more than just two days a month. There’s also some evidence one of the secondaries could be struggling slightly: while the Millais School has an above-average progress 8 measure, The Forest School got a score of -0.44 last year, despite only five per cent of pupils being on free school meals. Only having one other school from the same age phase to bounce off may be less supportive than being part of a more secondary-focused group.

Nevertheless, the partnership’s attainment data would please most academy trust bosses. Every primary school except one has a higher or the same proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and maths as the local authority average, and all the schools were Ofsted ‘good’ or better at their last inspections. There’s much more work to be done – Winn admits the Twitter page is lying idle – but the partnership seems less in need of help, than helping itself.

It begs the question: if you can get pretty good outcomes for £47,000 a year, are the big leadership teams in some MATs quite what they’re cracked up to be?





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# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
CONTACT US [NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK](mailto:NEWS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK)

**Schools will reopen to a new world. They have earned the nation's trust and should be supported to shape it, writes Mike Ion**

The first thing we need to come to terms with when it comes to schools reopening is that it will take time for students, teachers and parents to readjust. Whatever the "new normal" is, it will take far longer to get there than it did to adapt to lockdown.

The second is that the "new normal" will not just be in schools but across society, and that schools will have a responsibility to help shape and define what it looks like.

School leaders' response to the crisis has been amazing, albeit largely improvised, and one of its defining characteristics has been the light shone on the too-often-forgotten contributions that schools and teachers make to their communities. Staff understand the importance of their school to their local areas, and Covid-19 has highlighted the fact that headteachers are major "influencers", to use a term from the Instagram generation. Families look to school-based staff for reassurance in times of crisis, for support and guidance on topics way beyond education.

And whether it's donating PPE and making visitors for the NHS, or distributing food vouchers and running a foodbank, schools have shown time and again that they don't wait to be asked before putting that help in place.

The new normal must recognise and celebrate this vital work and include it in any evaluation of a school's effectiveness.

Another key feature has been a new-found sense of co-operation. Local authorities, MATs, SATs,



MIKE ION

Education director,  
Avanti Schools Trust

## Post Covid-19, we need a school system built on trust

headteachers, teachers, governors, parents, private schools, universities and commercial companies have shared resources for free, offered each other advice, sought innovative

the same challenges. We should seek to build on the "all in this together" mantra and continue to support the creation, design and implementation of free learning platforms for all.

**"Schools' renewed civic leadership is the foundation upon which the 'new normal' should be built"**

ways of working together and generally been nice to each other. After what feels like for ever, it has been truly heartening to watch collaboration trump competition.

The past few weeks have helped us realise that, though it is sometimes a bit disparate and disjointed, we remain part of a national education system – a system that fundamentally shares the same goals and aspirations and broadly faces

But it isn't enough simply to say school leaders should promote the view that we are stronger together. Collective endeavour really is both a strength and a virtue, yet so much of our system encourages a divisive "them and us" culture.

For example, league tables do little to promote collegiate behaviour, and in fact cause segregation of children on the basis of flawed data. What is more, they reveal little, if anything,



about the overall effectiveness or character of a school and the many social and economic factors that impact on children's attainment. Like all good sales pitches, league tables give only one side of the story, and not the one that's favourable to pupils on free school meals, children with additional needs, or the teachers who work with them.

Then there's the Ofsted/school divide, which needs to quickly become part of the old order. If this necessitates radical reform of the inspection system, then so be it. Virtually all schools across the country have responded to the challenges created by Covid-19 in an exemplary fashion, making the 'outstanding' label seem at best irrelevant, and the 'inadequate' judgment unthinkable.

Whether we are willing to consider these changes or not, we may have little choice in the end. Young people who have been accessing learning in these past few weeks have done so in more varied, thoughtful and engaging ways. Their expectations will be changed. And those who haven't been accessing learning haven't been doing so for a reason. Continuing to focus on targets, learning objectives, WALTs and WILFs over the creation of learning experiences that fully engage, challenge and excite them would do them all an injustice.

Schools will come out of this crisis earlier than most of the rest of society. Their renewed taste for civic leadership is the foundation upon which the "new normal" should be built. It will take time, but all they need is to be trusted and supported to make a success of it. After all, they've earned it.

# Opinion

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

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



DEBRA  
RUTLEY

CEO Aspire Alternative Provision MAT

**In the second instalment of our series following the impacts of lockdown on the personal and professional lives of educators, Debra Rutley opens up her #lockdowndiary**

I'm determined to keep to my usual routine as much as possible, so each day starts early.

I think it's incredibly important that we maintain our networks and sense of community, so first thing each day I check Twitter and my WhatsApp notifications. I'm part of an AP CEO group and the support and generosity shown by these colleagues has been invaluable. The group also feeds back to the DfE so I'm hopeful that we're doing our bit to influence their thinking.

Next, I check the daily title on Hannah Wilson's #DailyWritingChallenge and start to gather my thoughts for my daily blog before my morning call with our school leaders. We set our priorities for the day and reflect on emerging issues and government announcements.

On Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, many of my team volunteer to deliver food to our students and their families. I like to join them as often as possible so

today I head over to Waddesdon Manor. We'd begun to develop our relationship with the Rothschild Foundation before lockdown happened, so when they asked how they could help, I suggested they could provide food for our families, and they have been cooking three meals a week for 180 families in their kitchens at Waddesdon ever since!

Next, it's the SLT video call, where we discuss what's happening across the MAT. We start each meeting with a check-in that is personal, rather than work-related. Today our questions were: How are you? What are you missing the most? What are you most grateful for?

“ Each day throws up a host of challenges well beyond the realms of education

It's an opportunity to hear about how their lives are going beyond work, and their reflections help me to remember that everyone is experiencing lockdown differently. We all have our own challenges during this period, and to do our colleagues justice, we need to be able to understand and empathise



with their unique situations, whether that's looking after young children, or being lonely because they live on their own.

Each day throws up a host of challenges well beyond the realms of education. Tuesday alone, SLT helped families who have literally nothing at home (nothing to eat and nothing to entertain themselves with), bereaved young people and the police. Some students are refusing to stay at home and are continuing to meet in public places. When this happens the police report it to us, and it's up to us to pick them up and make sure they get home.

In the afternoons, I join the daily Covid meeting with the local

everything collaboratively, making sure we're not duplicating effort or reinventing the wheel. It is good to see these new ways of working emerging, and I hope this new understanding of one another's contexts continues beyond this crisis.

On Thursday I had a meeting with the Buckinghamshire Educational Psychologist team about the website we have developed with them to support teacher wellbeing. I'm proud that my colleagues across the county have been so open to learning from AP during this time, and I hope these new relationships will make us stronger as we enter the next phase of this crisis and begin the difficult process of re-opening all of our schools.

In the evenings, I sit down and write my 500-word blog for the #DailyWritingChallenge. I have never written this much before. The pace is exhilarating and the process is deeply cathartic. Many of my blogs are open letters written to my staff, the Aspire family. Like this diary, when this time is over I will have these pieces to look back on and remind myself that amongst all the pain and suffering, there were also moments of beauty, love, and tremendous strength of human spirit.

## Reviews

## RADIO REVIEW

## This curious revolution sidesteps conflict and ignores inequality

Melissa Benn, writer and education campaigner



The second episode of Alex Beard's *The Learning Revolution* for BBC Radio 4 falls short of asking the big questions about teaching's present and future challenges, writes Melissa Benn

Since he published *Natural Born Learners* in 2018 Alex Beard has become something of a one-man explorer of education's near future. In this second instalment of his Radio 4 series, he looks specifically at the challenge of teaching, and all the usual paradoxes come tumbling out. Peer-to-peer learning seems likely to grow, yet expert teachers – now renamed coaches, instructors and facilitators (Ugh!) – will become ever more crucial. Artificial Intelligence will dramatically reshape learning, yet that will only highlight the need for the human touch. Teaching “will be everywhere”, yet by 2030 we will face a staggering global shortfall of 69 million teachers.

Some developments seem exciting, such as local learning labs and studios in every workplace where employees as lifelong learners can absorb the skills of experts. Others seem potentially sinister, such as wearable technology that keeps track of students' brainwaves and emotions.

Other ideas don't actually sound that new. I wish I could take Californian psychologist Alison Gopnik – who sees cooking, childcare and carpentry as skills of the future – back to my 1970s London comprehensive. We learned all three, albeit in strictly gender-rigid ways.

Or what about the idea that students of the future will enjoy a pick-and-mix approach to knowledge, moving from

online tutorials to collaboration in a local lab to a session out in the nearest wood or forest? Forget the gleaming iMacs for a moment. This emphasis on variety, collaboration and learning-by-doing reminds me of nothing so much as the pioneering educational philosophies and practices of the original free schools, such as AS Neill's Summerhill, which opened nearly a century ago. It also sounds a lot like a day in the life of some of the more forward-looking primary and secondary schools that I have visited over the years.

*The Learning Revolution* cleverly sidesteps the current toxic divides within English education by travelling abroad. Beard takes us to inspiring institutions such as 42, a teacher-free coding university in the suburbs of Paris, and Agora, a school in the Netherlands that looks like a “futurist theme park” and where students are encouraged to design their own desks. But why then bring in the most traditionalist of English voices, such as the ubiquitous Katharine Birbalsingh and Daisy Christodoulou, and not talk to some of our outstanding homegrown innovators, such as the founders of XP School in Doncaster?

One of the more interesting ideas in the programme relates to teacher supply more than to teaching itself. Lucy Crehan, another Teach First graduate who went into global research, proposes that anyone with a passion for, or expertise in, a subject could offer their services to a school for just a few hours a week.

Then again, thinking about that 69 million shortfall, I fear that the

government might use such “mini-sessions” to replace much-needed professionals and so add teaching to the precarious gig economy. Nor will polished Apple hardware, body-surveillance systems and Jo Wicks-style online sessions solve the intractable problems, from boredom to exhaustion to lack of resources, faced by today's teachers.

The pragmatic likelihood is that teaching of the future will remain a mix of direct instruction in what Beard calls – a little tongue-in-cheek – “the basis of the operating system” (that's maths, English and science to you and me) and more collaborative and self-directed learning.

That future may be nearer than we think, thanks to the corona crisis. When we return to something like normal, our education system could look dramatically different, with fewer exams, more teacher assessment, a greater role for parents (sorry, I mean facilitators) and indeed a much bigger role given to online teaching and learning.

But we also know that millions of poorer children currently can't access resources for lack of appropriate tech and don't have parents who can help out. They risk facing more austere and uninspiring direct instruction in underfunded classrooms. Beard doesn't touch on the central question of inequality – in classrooms or in life, and that remains the biggest challenge of all. Now and in the future.

Melissa Benn's latest book is *Life Lessons: The Case for a National Education Service*, available from Verso

# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



### Closing the Reading Gap

**Author:** Alex Quigley

**Publisher:** Routledge

**Reviewer:** Douglas Wise, teacher of English and assistant principal, Sharnbrook Academy

If anything, schools' dependency on technology to see us through lockdown has made literacy even more of a critical issue. Alex Quigley opens his latest offering, *Closing the Reading Gap*, by stating that reading is the "master skill of school", a phrase he repeats four times in the introduction, and it is hard to imagine it isn't all the more so when "school" has essentially been reduced to a computer screen. Yet according to Quigley, reading doesn't receive the primacy it should in classrooms up and down the country.

The book's opening chapters provide a history of reading that encompass everything from the Sumerian schools where students worked on the original "tablets", to the farthest reaches of the internet, before moving on to the science of reading and some of the current debates around how young children are taught to read. Together, these form an intriguing theoretical framework for what comes next, which is a closer look at classroom practice and the challenges associated with helping students to read with greater fluency.

The complex and interacting factors that make reading difficult – the "arduous eight" – are deconstructed in chapter five, and Quigley recommends practical strategies that teachers and support staff can use to evaluate the accessibility of different texts prior to using them in the classroom.

The chapter on dyslexia particularly

resonated with me. Quigley writes sensitively and in depth about the struggles typically experienced by dyslexic students and the ways in which the barriers they face can be gradually overcome. Despite having taught English for over a decade, I realise now that my knowledge of dyslexia and its associated challenges was superficial at best. Read the anecdotes about Matthew at the beginning and end of the chapter and you may well feel the same way as me.

Quigley dedicates a whole chapter of the book to examining the specialised ways of reading, knowing and doing in different subject disciplines. He covers everything you'd expect and more, from the distinctive ways in which a geographer reads to how phonics teaching can aid vocabulary development in a second language. There's lots there. If you've got an eye on developing evidence-based approaches to "disciplinary literacy" within your department or across the whole school, this chapter will serve you very well. Irrespective of your subject area or role, though, *Closing the Reading Gap* will provide you with the knowledge you need to develop your students into fluent and skilful readers.

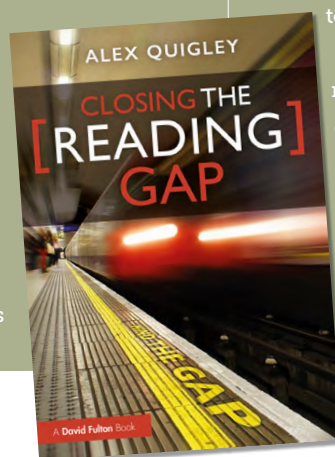
Particularly eye-opening for me was the overview provided on strategies

to help students engage with the distinctive structures of textbooks (and booklets and worksheets). We take this for granted at our own peril, and there's a decent chance that spending some time reading Quigley's exposition on this topic will have an immediate impact on your practice. It certainly will on mine.

The final chapter of the book begins with a reminder about why *Closing the Reading Gap* is so vital. Roughly a quarter of children arrived at secondary school in 2019 having failed to meet the expected standard. Quigley provides clear and detailed guidance on how best to assess reading at school before focusing on ways of growing a meaningful reading culture and curriculum. His writing is supported by two case studies – one from a primary school and one from a secondary – and he helpfully summarises the steps to take right at the end.

Beyond the actual content itself, Quigley applies his theory to his own writing, so that *Closing the Reading Gap* is an easily accessible text. The usable evidence, recommendations, strategies and case studies are all presented so that the book is easy to read cover to cover, and just as easy to use as a reference text.

Altogether then, I enthusiastically recommend *Closing the Reading Gap* with five shiny *Schools Week* stars. I know it'll genuinely change significant aspects of my classroom practice for the better when school finally resumes, as it is already influencing my online teaching.



# Reviews



**Hannah Wilson is headteacher and founding member of WomenEd**

@THEHOPEFULHT

**#DailyWritingChallenge** is a collection of powerful blogs by brilliant educators written from their courageous, compassionate, vulnerable hearts as they strive to make sense of what is happening in the world during the Covid-19 outbreak. Each day, a different human value becomes the topic for exploration, giving rise to a wonderfully diverse range of writing that is as cathartic for its readers as it is for its writers. Here is a selection of my favourites so far, and I hope you'll join us as the project continues to grow.

## Gratitude

@Auribins

David Gumbrell's piece on Gratitude starts with a game and moves on to mindsets. He invites us to consider what we take for granted, what we need versus what we want. Framing his post in a BC (Before Covid) and PC (Post Covid) timeframe, he encourages us to reflect on what is truly important and what we can learn from the crisis we are faced with.

## TOP BLOGS of the week

### Joy

@NicolaJOwen

Joy is in the giving is the message of Nicola Owen's blog. She takes us back to a night watching a football match in a pub in Manchester, which created opportunities for her in the local community. She was encouraged to gift her theatre skills to run a drama school for some local children, and this resulted in a pantomime performance of *Cinderella*. Reflecting on the relationships she developed, she shares the joy it brought her.

### Emotions

@AndrewHatchard

Reflecting on why he is such an "emotional conundrum", Andrew Hatchard shares the wall he hides behind. Attending a rough school taught him how to survive. He learnt how to avoid confrontation and emotion at all costs. Sharing moments when he wept, he starts from positive anecdotes of football matches, then reveals the pain of losing a baby and the raw emotion that cascaded on to the football pitch one Sunday. As his story unravels, we learn about the grief he and his wife experienced and the emotional rollercoaster they went on as they tried to conceive and as they became parents.

### Family

@rondelle10\_b

Bukky Yusuf's blog pays homage to a different kind of family, her Twitter family.

She recounts how she entered the world of educational social media and found it very confusing. Over time she has curated a strong, supportive network of people who have nurtured her, as she has nurtured them. Emphasising the "transformative professional development" opportunities she has been able to access, she spotlights the personal relationships she has fostered too. The EduTwitter community has become Bukky's *querencia*, a place where she draws strength and can be her authentic self.

### Trust

@Toriacaire

As the founder of a hashtag and an emerging community of "Tiny Voices" on Twitter, Toria Bono explores the value of trust. People who are new to EduTwitter who stumble across her profile trust her to look after them and help them to find their feet and find their voice. She in turn trusts a team of online volunteers to support, advise and guide them. With more people taking to Twitter during lockdown, and with behaviours often fuelled by emotions, she shares some of the challenges she has faced. Resolute in her commitment to nurture others, she resolves to trust those who volunteer and their intentions.

### Opportunity

@DRutleyAspire

Developing the theme of nurturing others, Debra reflects on the opportunity to show her love for her family and her school community through food. Taking us back to her childhood in Yorkshire, she shares her weekly task of rustling up a meal for her family. The lockdown has reminded her that food is a symbol of love as she provides it to connect and nurture others during this crisis.

All of the #DailyWritingChallenge blogs have been collated at <https://www.valuesbasededucation.com/daily-writing-challenge>. To contribute your own piece, head over to Twitter and find the hashtag.

# Research

This term Jonathan Haslam will regularly review the evidence on a school-related theme. Contact Haslam on Twitter @IEE\_York if you have a topic you would like him to cover

## Should teachers be evaluating the impact of what they do?

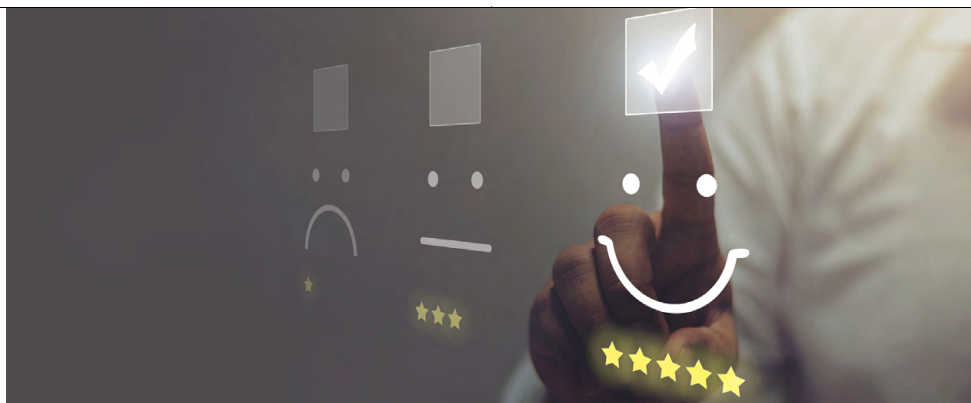
**Jonathan Haslam, director, Institute for Effective Education**

**T**he answer to this article's titular question might seem obvious, but a new systematic review has revealed just how little we know about teachers as evaluators.

According to the review, evaluation refers to the systematic investigation of the effectiveness, worth, or merit of a programme, practice or policy. Ultimately, this leads to a judgment about the value of a particular approach. The value of an approach might not necessarily be in terms of academic outcomes for students. It might be its impact on social-emotional outcomes, staff workload, financial cost, or whatever value is important to the teacher or school. Does the approach "work" to improve that outcome?

Teachers and schools are informally evaluating particular approaches all the time. Even in these crazy days of home learning and nearly empty schools, teachers are continually weighing what has worked well and what hasn't, and how things could be improved tomorrow. The question is whether this informal measuring of proof can be made more robust, and whether there is any value in that.

The systematic review by Amanda McFadden and Kate Williams from the Queensland University of Technology found 19 studies on improving the research or evaluation capacity of teachers. Most of these were small qualitative studies that focused on teacher-action research as a facilitator of professional development. There was almost no research that looked at the potential of building evaluation skills in teachers. The authors recommend that there should be more emphasis in teacher education on evaluation and



evaluative thinking, given its potential to positively impact the professional practice of teachers and student-learning outcomes.

One problem, though, is that, as the researchers point out, there is little evidence of the impact made by teachers carrying out their own evaluation or research.

They found some evidence that teachers who had conducted their own research had, for example, more positive attitudes to research, used systematic critical thinking skills in reflective practice, and had recognised that it enhanced their teacher identity. But there was no evidence of impact on a range of longer term outcomes, such as whether or not the teachers used more evidence-based practices, or whether it resulted in more effective teaching and better outcomes for students. That's not to say that it won't, but at the moment, there is no research to say one way or the other.

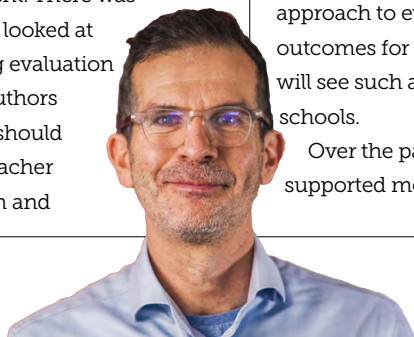
Given that uncertainty, it is perhaps not surprising that the idea that teachers might carry out their own research or evaluation isn't mentioned in guidance such as the recent Early Career Framework. Until we have better evidence that a more structured approach to evaluation leads to better outcomes for students, it is unlikely that we will see such a policy widely supported in schools.

Over the past four years, the IEE has supported more than 25 teachers to run

their own small-scale evaluation projects, and our experience reflects the findings of this review. The results of the individual studies have been interesting, and often surprising, though, given that they are small-scale, we can't generalise the findings. The enthusiasm, knowledge and skills of the teachers and schools involved have increased dramatically, but it's difficult to identify if there will be any long-term impact. Until we can identify this long-term benefit, such evaluations are likely to remain the preserve of enthusiastic teachers and schools, rather than a way in which the evidence base of the profession might be developed.

I think we should try to find out if it's worth it, and that would take a fraction of the money spent on successive government initiatives. Though calls for better evaluation have often focused on student outcomes, evaluative approaches can be applied to any aspect of education. Changes made at local or national level may have all kinds of consequences, whether intended or unintended, and as the review points out "often have downstream effects on key issues such as teacher retention... The use of evaluation to zoom in on such mechanisms may be highly beneficial."

**Amanda McFadden, Kate E. Williams,**  
*Teachers as evaluators: Results from a systematic literature review, Studies in Educational Evaluation, Volume 64, (2020).*



# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## TUESDAY

Sir Michael Wilshaw, the venerable former Ofsted chief inspector, has long faced accusations that he's rather fond of his own voice.

Lo and behold, he popped up again this week, this time on Newsnight on BBC2, saying that teachers might have to work weekends and evenings to remedy the impact of school closures.

Appearing via videolink, we also got a sneaky peak inside Chez Wilshaw – and it didn't disappoint.



Standing proudly on the wall was a caricature of himself as the no-nonsense cop Dirty Harry (a moniker that stuck with him from his days at Ofsted). Wilshaw even read Clint Eastwood's famous "do you feel lucky, punk?" monologue line on radio during his last day at the inspectorate.

## WEDNESDAY

Fun and games at the virtual education select committee, which had Gavin Williamson as its special guest this week.

The education secretary has taken a bit of flak for being so slow on getting help to poorer pupils in areas where there's buggler-all internet.

Caroline Johnson, the Conservative MP for Sleaford and North Hykeham, was trying to highlight the lack of broadband in her constituency, but her lack of broadband meant she kept cutting in and out and nobody could hear her.

Williamson drily noted Johnson had "demonstrated some of the challenges of poor internet connection".

Meanwhile Labour MP Ian Mearns had to step in after chair Robert Halfon disappeared from our screens, claiming "I think we've lost the chair" (they did find him again later).

Williamson also did his own disappearing act – specifically while being asked why his department ignored an offer for help to boost capacity on his hapless national free school meals voucher system.

The normally talkative MP promptly shutdown questioning by saying he would have to respond in writing.

## THURSDAY

News reaches us today that Edenred, the company running the Department for Education's shambolic national free school meals voucher system, is recruiting an IT support technician. As one exasperated school business manager pointed out on Twitter, with a two-week advertisement run, four-week recruitment period, one month's notice – he or she should be ready to work by August 1 (bang smack in the

summer holidays when pupils won't be eligible).

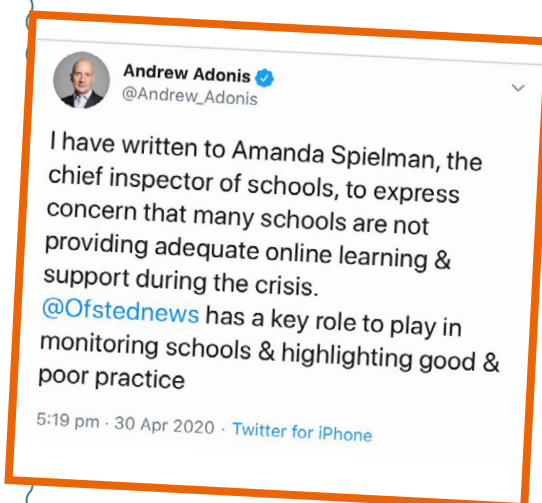
Meanwhile, when cash-strapped parents are crying out for the vouchers, the Edenred system continues to disappoint. School staff are now working into the early hours just to log on to its website and check whether vouchers have been issued.

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Dear all teachers that have had to build a virtual school in just a couple of weeks to help pupils at home keep learning, as well as ensuring vulnerable pupils are safe and juggling all this while potentially looking after your own homebound kids – a former schools minister has a message for you.

Labour peer Andrew Adonis has written to Ofsted to "express concern" that "many schools are not providing adequate online learning and support during the crisis".

His solution: time for Ofsted to name and shame those with "poor practice". Andrew, we have a message from you on behalf of our readers: get in the sea.



# 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**