

SCHOOLS WEEK

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

From silent corridors to sanctuary status



P20-22

School leaders have been left in the dark



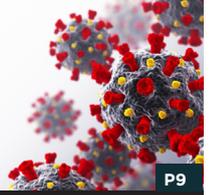
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The Ofsted reports published in lockdown



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Schools face wait for coronavirus evidence



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FRIDAY, MAY 15 2020 | EDITION 214

Over to you

- Ministers accused of 'abdicating responsibility' to headteachers
- Leaders face battles with staff and parents over reopening plans
- Government admits homebound pupils will miss out on learning
- DfE won't reveal when it will publish the scientific advice

SCHOOLS WEEK

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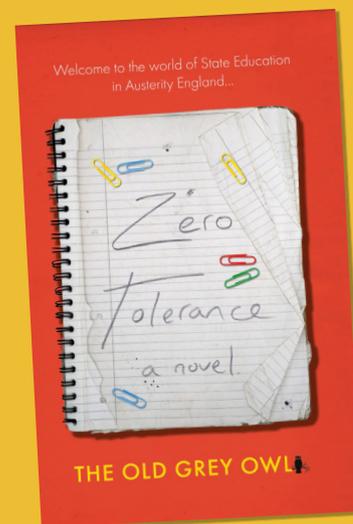
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Governance: more flexibility needed to face coming challenges

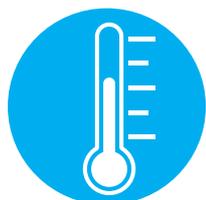


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News

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Re-opening plans: heads face staff disputes and anxious parents

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Ministers are accused of “abdicating responsibility and handing it to heads” over their contentious plans for some pupils to return to school next month.

School leaders have been told to prepare for the potential return of pupils in reception, year 1 and year 6 to their classrooms on June 1.

But they face having to do so amid patchy government guidance on how to keep pupils safe and disputes with staff who have been advised by unions not to engage on any reopening planning.

Meanwhile, parents are also concerned about whether it's safe to send their children back to school, with leaders urged to “manage expectations” and be “open and honest with parents about the challenges”.

Jonny Uttley, chief executive of The Education Alliance academy trust, said the DfE's guidance “reads less like a serious proposal and more like abdicating responsibility and handing it to heads”.

A poll of more than 8,000 school staff by Teacher Tapp showed 43 per cent believe the government's response to Covid-19 had been “very bad”, while a further 34 per cent said it had been “fairly bad”.

Ministers this week scrambled to reassure school staff they would be listened to. Unions representing education staff had urged the government to “step back” from its target date, amid fears over safety.

The National Education Union and Unison have even gone as far as instructing their members – mostly teaching and support staff – not to engage with planning for a June 1 return.

Letters advising this have been passed on by staff to leaders.

The Guardian reported last night the NASUWT union had also threatened legal action against councils and the government if teachers were forced back into classrooms during the epidemic.

The NAHT said they recognise the “significant challenges this has posed for our members”.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of ASCL, warned of a risk of a “splintering of trust” between leaders and some staff.

“That, if it happened, would be a terrible legacy of a period that needs collaboration rather



than discord,” he said in a briefing to members.

Heads are also facing tricky conversations with parents.

For example, Uttley highlighted the expectation of schools operating in “bubbles” of no more than 15 pupils per class (see page 6).

“That puts almost every school at max 50 per cent capacity. That's absolutely fine, but be honest with parents and stop over-promising. At the moment there's a real mismatch between expectation and the reality.”

Government guidance published yesterday evening also stated that, as primary schools re-open, it “may be difficult to maintain the same level of remote education” for pupils who remain at home – which is likely to land badly with parents (page 7).

Leaders have been told by their unions that it's right to start preparing to re-open as per the government plans.

But the teaching unions' resistance to the plans has been questioned. Speaking in parliament on Wednesday, Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, accused them of “scaremongering”.

He said the “only consideration” behind the decision was the “best interests

and the welfare of children and those who work in schools”.

But he added: “Sometimes scaremongering and making people fear is really unfair, and not a welcome pressure that is to be placed on families, children and teachers alike.”

Lord Blunkett, the former education secretary, also told Radio 4's Today programme he was “deeply critical” of the unions' attitude.

“It's about how can we work together to make it work as safely, not one hundred per cent, as safely as possible. Anyone who works against that, in my view, is working against the interests of children,” he said.

However, just hours after Williamson's “scaremongering” comments, the DfE's chief scientific adviser admitted that he hadn't even assessed the effectiveness of the re-opening guidance – sparking further worry (see page 9).

The NEU has stated it wants schools to open as soon as possible, but only when it is safe to do so.



Jonny Uttley



Lord Blunkett

The road to reopening schools

The government has this week published its plans for how it believes schools can safely reopen. Here's what they said

WEDNESDAY (MAY 13)

Schools have remained open for vulnerable children and those of key workers. About 14 per cent of vulnerable pupils and 5 per cent of key workers' children attended last week.

Since Wednesday, schools and councils have been advised to "urge more children who would benefit from attending in person to do so". The government said this is because "we have made progress in reducing the transmission of coronavirus" and it is "no longer necessary for parents of eligible children to keep them at home".

JUNE 1 (AT THE EARLIEST)

Primary schools will be asked to open for nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups. Attendance is not compulsory, but pupils will be "strongly encouraged" to attend where there are no shielding concerns for the child or their household. School leaders will not be held to account for attendance.

However, this will only happen if the government's five key tests are met (see below). As a result, schools are asked to "plan on that basis", ahead of confirmation.

Secondary schools and colleges will also be "expected" to offer "some face-to-face contact" with year 10 and 12 pupils. This will not be a return to a full timetable, just "some support to supplement pupils' remote education".

Alternative provision schools should "mirror" this, and special schools should "work toward a phased return of more children".

BEFORE SUMMER

The government's "ambition" is to bring "all primary year groups back to school before the summer holidays, for a month is feasible". This will be "kept under review", however.

The additional primary year groups will only be welcomed back if the "most up-to-date assessment of the risk posed by the virus indicates it is appropriate to have larger numbers of children within schools".



WHY ARE THESE PUPILS PRIORITISED?

The government said pupils in **reception** and **year 1** are "mastering the essential basics, including counting and the fundamentals of reading and writing, and learning to socialise with their peers".

Attending early education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and support children's social and emotional development, Government added.

Year 6 pupils have been prioritised as they are preparing for the transition to secondary school and will "benefit immensely from time with their friends and teachers to ensure they are ready".

Year 10 and 12 students are preparing for "key examinations next year and are most at risk of falling behind due to time out of school".

It says there is "moderately high" scientific confidence in evidence that suggests younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus.

Second, evidence shows the "particularly detrimental impact" time out of education has on younger pupils. Older children are "more likely to have higher numbers of contacts outside school so pose a greater transmission risk" and are "typically better" at home learning.

Advice for secondaries states they should "limit" the attendance of those returning and keep students in "small groups".

THE GOVERNMENT'S FIVE TESTS:

1. Making sure the NHS can cope
2. A "sustained and consistent" fall in the daily death rate
3. Rate of infection decreasing to "manageable levels"
4. Ensuring supply of tests and PPE can meet future demand
5. Being confident any adjustments would not risk a second peak that would overwhelm the NHS



News

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'Safe bubbles' will burst, heads tell Williamson

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Plans to reopen schools with pupils and staff in "safe bubbles" are "unworkable" alongside the "ambition" that all primary children return before summer, says a school leaders' union.

Gavin Williamson told MPs on Wednesday that the government had developed a "hierarchy of controls" to "ensure that the risk of transmission of coronavirus is minimised within schools".

Government guidance for the phased return of pupils from June 1 concedes that younger children cannot adhere to social distancing.

To mitigate this, the government's advice is to split classes in half to form "small groups" of no more than 15 pupils for each teacher.

These groups will then spend the day together, without mixing with other "bubbles". Desks should also be spaced "as far apart as possible".

But the National Association of Head Teachers says the plans are "impractical and unworkable".

Paul Whiteman, its general secretary, told MPs that under social distancing rules, his members' schools "would only accommodate classes of 10 to 12 rather than 15".

In a poll conducted on Monday night, 70 per cent of union members said they did not think it would be feasible to welcome reception pupils and those in years 1 and 6 from June. Meanwhile, 97 per cent said they did not think the government's "ambition" for all primary pupils to be back for a month before the end of the academic year was feasible.

The NAHT has told members: "Unless there is a dramatic change in circumstances in the coming month, we do not believe this will be possible."

On the phased return of some year groups, the union advised school leaders to proceed with caution on plans to reopen. It also said they and their governing bodies would remain responsible for evaluating whether and how it might be safe to return.

In a letter to parents, North Denes primary, in Norfolk, said that while it could "make things safer", as soon as "lot of children return, I can tell you that the risk will be there".

Denise Whiting, the school's head, said the youngest children would find it the most difficult as they learned by "touching, doing, being with



Gavin Williamson

others and sharing – all of which will have to be limited as far as is possible".

The letter later states, in capital letters, that school "WILL NOT BE NORMAL", with Whiting adding that she was being "totally open and honest".

She said classes would accommodate between five to eight pupils, alongside one adult, which meant pupils might attend on a rota basis.

The NAHT said "a degree of prioritisation" was likely in "almost all cases".

But the union told members it understood the Department for Education would prefer individual year groups returning "on a consistent basis" rather than alternating groups on a rota, with younger children prioritised.

Williamson said bringing pupils back in a "phased and controlled manner" was the "responsible thing to do", adding that he had taken advice from Public Health England and the government's scientific and medical advisers.

"That is why, when we created the hierarchy of controls about creating safe bubbles for children, teachers and

support staff to work in, it was informed by them."

The "hierarchy of measures" are: avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms, frequent hand-cleaning and good respiratory hygiene, regular cleaning of settings, and minimising contact and mixing.

Other recommended approaches include a rota for dropping off and picking up pupils, daily cleaning of classrooms, corridor dividers and toilet limits.

Pupils will also be given access to testing if they or a member of their family has coronavirus symptoms. If they test positive, the rest of their class or "bubble" will be sent home and asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

But Rebecca Long-Bailey, the shadow education secretary, said the guidance "does not yet give the clear assurances over safety that are needed".

"Anxious shielding families, worried grandparents, teaching staff in fear — sadly, this sums up the theme of the past 48 hours," she said.

Williamson was also forced to defend advice stating the "majority" of education staff would not need PPE beyond what they already used.



Rebecca Long-Bailey

News

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Home-learners may suffer when pupils return, DfE admits

SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER @SCHOOLSWEEK

Reopening primary schools means the quality of home education offered to those pupils who aren't allowed back in yet is likely to suffer, the government has admitted.

New guidance on reopening schools, published yesterday evening, states many schools have been able to offer "high-quality remote education opportunities or programmes over recent weeks".

The government wants primary schools to open to pupils in reception, year 1 and year 6 from June 1, meaning more staff will be needed to provide face-to-face teaching in school.

The guidance adds: "This means that it may be more difficult to maintain the same level of remote education provision for pupils in the year groups who are not eligible to attend, or for those pupils in year groups who are eligible to attend but who themselves cannot."

The government advises schools in this situation to consider using the online classes provided by the Oak National Academy or other platforms to provide additional support.

They also suggest looking at how learning delivered in school, "if manageable, could be made available to pupils learning remotely".



The government had previously said it wanted schools to "use their best endeavours" to ensure pupils who don't return before the summer are still able to access online learning.

The NAHT union has said this presents "very clear and obvious challenges", adding the impact additional children has on the school's ability to support home learning should be a "key consideration".

A poll by Teacher Tapp, from earlier in lockdown at the end of March, found nearly half of primary teachers had set work for their pupils via an online learning platform. The second most popular method to set work in primary was via physical workbooks or worksheets.

The NAHT has advised leaders to be "very mindful of the feasibility and workload implications for staff when it comes to balancing school and home provision".

They suggest using a "light-touch approach" to home activities for pupils in the attending year groups.

The government's expectations are less likely to cause a headache for secondary schools and colleges, who have been told to offer year 10 and 12s some "face to face" support from next month.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson has explained all children in those year groups should have the opportunity to go into school to speak with their teachers so they can assess what learning and support they need over the following weeks.

For the other returning pupils, guidance states leaders are "best placed to make decisions about how to support and educate their pupils during this period". It adds: "No school will be penalised if they are unable to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to their pupils during this period."

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

DfE official warns of 75% attainment gap widening

The attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their better-off peers could widen by as much as 75 per cent because of the coronavirus outbreak, a senior Department for Education official has warned.

Vicki Stewart, the deputy director of the DfE's pupil premium and school food division, told a Westminster Education Forum event on Wednesday that the pandemic and the resulting partial school closures would "almost certainly" have "a very significant impact" on the attainment gap.

"The predictions are stark - up to a 75 per cent widening," she said. "We are all working very hard to think about what actions we can take to support schools in mitigating against the widening of that gap, and how, in the slightly medium longer-term, we can support schools as part of their recovery phase to narrow that gap."

Her warning followed calls from senior MPs, led by Robert Halfon, the chair of the education select committee, for a catch-up premium to pay tutors to help to bridge the growing gap.

Schools have been closed since March 20 to all but the most vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers.

The latest data shows that just 14 per cent of vulnerable children attended school last week and that most looked-after children and those with education, health and care plans were also not attending.

And a recent YouGov poll found 51 per cent of teachers had pupils who had "dropped out of education altogether" during lockdown, while more than 70 per cent said coronavirus would cause moderate or mild harm to their pupils' education.

Schools Week revealed last week that four charities - the Education Endowment

Foundation (EEF), Sutton Trust, Impetus and Nesta - had been in talks with the government over plans for a national tutoring pilot.

On Monday, Boris Johnson appeared to confirm ministers' involvement, telling MPs the government was "working with the EEF and other partners to see what we can do to support the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children".

Javed Khan, the chief executive of the Barnardo's children's charity, said schools would face a "huge spike in demand" for support from "hidden children" who had become vulnerable as a result of the coronavirus crisis.

"The impact of the isolation that they are living with, the mental health issues that they are now facing that they weren't before... they are not being contacted because they were not in the system before this began."

Transport jams as bus services axed

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH INVESTIGATES

Schools are facing logistical problems just to ensure pupils get to the school gates safely without coming into close contact with others.

That includes making sure pupils avoid walking in “clusters” to school, along with road safety – particularly around the school gates – should car journeys increase.

Meanwhile there are fears that reports of a 40 per cent drop in bus services could leave pupils stranded.

Jon Andrews, school system and performance director at think tank Education Policy Institute, said: “How children will get to school is one of the many things that school leaders will be grappling with as they consider how to re-open.”

Government guidance published this week said schools should encourage parents and children to walk or cycle, and avoid public transport at peak times.

The National Travel Survey data states the average travel distance for primary schools is 1.5 miles and 3.5 miles for secondary school.

Andrews said: “For many walking will simply not be practical.”

The most recent National Travel Survey of about 2,000 people in 2018 found that 44 per cent of children aged between five and 16 years old walked to school and just three per cent cycled.

While 36 per cent overall went in a car or van, this figure increases to 45 per cent for primary children.

At primary, one per cent of pupils used a private bus and two per cent used a local bus. But the figures jump considerably when looking at secondary school pupils – 21 per cent use a local bus, eight per cent a private bus and two per cent go by rail.

While pupils in rural areas face greater distances to get to school, Andrews said those in urban areas, and particularly London, are reliant on public transport.

But the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK has said bus operators were running about 40 per cent of their services.

In the capital, Transport for London said the bus network would only be able to carry about 13-15 per cent of normal passenger numbers with social distancing, even when all services were



operating again.

Andrews said: “Capacity on public transport is likely to remain reduced, and families may be reluctant to use it.”

The government has published guidance for children travelling on public transport. It states they should keep a two-metre distance from others. If this isn't possible, children should “avoid physical contact, face away from others, and keep the time spent near others as short as possible”.

Meanwhile government guidance for local authorities on providing home-to-school transport states they should look at using larger vehicles, running two vans or buses rather than one, and cordoning off seats to spread out passengers.

A survey of members by the Association of School and College Leaders last month found “a lack of transport for pupils” as one of the situations listed as making it “impossible for schools to open on a specified date”.

Schools are beginning to come up with their own plans. Wreake Valley Academy, in Leicestershire, will be staggering start times for years 10 and 12 when they re-open. This will be done alphabetically by surname.

Up to 70 per cent of pupils walk to school, while the rest cycle, get dropped off or use two school buses serving villages in their ten-mile catchment radius.

But concerns remain about making sure students who are walking in remain socially distant. “We do not want to encourage students to be walking in clusters,” head Tim Marston said. “Our messaging will be clear.”

The government has announced new pop-up bike lanes, wider pavements and cycle and bus-only corridors will be created “within weeks” as part of a £2 billion package.

But Chris Bennett, head of behaviour change and engagement at walking and cycling charity Sustrans, warned these need to happen “as soon as possible”.

Special schools will face their own unique challenges, too. School Census travel figures, which Andrews said were last collected by the Department for Education in 2011, show 57 per cent of special school pupils relied on a bus to get to school.

For transporting children with complex needs who need help, for example with seatbelts, government guidance says “appropriate actions” should be taken to reduce the risk if hygiene or social distancing is not possible.

Paul Silvester, head teacher at Newman Special School, in Rotherham, added the sector may need to encourage parents to bring in their children.

But he said increased traffic would itself “create a bottleneck. We have a single-track drive with a turning circle... So if we have more traffic, it can get a bit tricky.”



News

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Adviser's admission heightens safety worries

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

The Department for Education's chief scientific adviser admits he has not assessed whether guidance on reopening schools is effective.

During a startling exchange with the parliamentary science and technology committee on Wednesday, Osama Rahman also suggested the guidance was a "first draft" and would be "developed".

He then admitted the decision to bring pupils back was made by cabinet, not the DfE.

Asked about the coronavirus transmission rate among children, Rahman said the evidence was mixed, but there was a "low degree of confidence in evidence they might transmit it less".

Challenged whether the plans were "putting together hundreds of potential vectors that can then transmit", Rahman said: "Possibly, depending on school sizes."

This admission has exacerbated the sector's safety concerns about reopening, something that just hours before Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, brushed off as "scaremongering".

The department later published a "clarification" letter from Rahman in which he said he had "full confidence" in the plans.

Dr Patrick Roach, the general secretary of the NASUWT union, said the admissions were "truly shocking and disturbing".

"The government has simply not provided a single shred of evidence that opening schools from June 1 will be safe for children or for teachers."

During a hearing that left some MPs visibly bemused, Rahman admitted he had not assessed how effectively the government's proposed actions for schools to reopen safely could be implemented.

He said the department was working with Public Health England on the "first draft advice" and would be "discussing this further with PHE and others ... in terms of feedback".

He later said he would expect the guidance published this week to "be developed", adding: "Certainly, my role will be to continue, if we have updated consensus on the science from SAGE [the government's scientific advisory group] to ensure



Osama Rahman

that that feeds into the guidance."

When pressed that any reissued guidance would give schools "very little time" to prepare to open, Rahman said: "The June 1 opening is dependent on a bunch of conditions being met, as I think the prime minister announced. So schools have been asked to prepare for that opening."

Teachers are concerned by government guidance that they do not need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) in most situations.

When asked what evidence the department had, Rahman said: "I don't know, I don't think I was necessary at the PPE meeting. You'll have to ask SAGE that."

Greg Clark, chair of the committee, replied: "But you're the chief scientific adviser to the DfE."

Rahman responded: "I am. I'm not sure when they discussed PPE, it was a general PPE discussion."

Carol Monaghan, the Scottish National Party's education spokesperson and a former teacher, said she "did not think the profession will be satisfied or put at ease with what they are hearing".

The DfE letter, signed by Rahman, was to "offer some important points of clarification in case my position is misrepresented", he said.

He had "full confidence" in the plans and was involved "in all parts of the guidance recently published". He added the DfE had been "led by the science at all of those key decision points".

Vix Lowthion, the Green Party spokesperson for education, said the clarification was "strong-arm revisionism" that "read like something from a totalitarian state".



In a letter to Parliament's Science and Technology Committee, the Department for Education's Chief Scientific Adviser has clarified some of the evidence he gave today.

Greg Clark MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

13th May 2020

Dear Greg,

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Science and Technology Committee.

I want to offer some important points of clarification in case my position is misrepresented.

As Chief Scientific Adviser, my team and I have been closely involved in advising on the Government's position on reopening education institutions. I have also, as mentioned, been at all meetings of the Children's Task and Finish Working Group, a sub-group of SAGE, which has made a key contribution to the recent decisions.

I have full confidence in the plan to reopen education institutions for all the reasons set out by Government, subject to the conditionality of the five tests, including a decreasing transmission rate. I was involved in the development of all parts of the guidance recently published by the Department for Education and fed in at various stages. The final clearances from a scientific perspective ultimately rest with Public Health England and the Chief Medical Officer and those clearances were secured in full.

Throughout, the Department for Education has been led by the science at all of these key decision points and that will continue to be the case throughout this pandemic.

Osama Rahman

Osama Rahman
Chief Scientific Adviser

WHEN WILL THE EVIDENCE BE PUBLISHED?

Gavin Williamson told MPs this week he was "more than happy" to share "all the advice" it had from SAGE.

He also revealed he had asked scientific advisers "to give briefings for the sector" to "help them understand" the decision.

"When you have medical and scientific advice that ... it is the right time to start bringing schools back in a phased and controlled manner, it seems only the right thing to do, and the only responsible thing to do," he told MPs.

However, the department did not respond when asked when this would be published. The publication of other SAGE advice suggests schools could be waiting some time.

A study by the BBC found that just 27 of the 120 pieces of evidence reviewed by SAGE over the course of 20 meetings up to mid-April have been published.

One of the unpublished papers is entitled "What is the evidence for transmission of Covid-19 by children [or in schools]". It was reviewed on April 7, more than five weeks ago.

A photograph of a young man with glasses and a woman with glasses leaning over a laptop, looking at the screen together in what appears to be a classroom or office setting.

Create mentally healthy learning environments

CACHE is once again supporting Mental Health Awareness Week, which runs 18th-24th May.

The importance of this year's campaign has been amplified by COVID-19, and as the leading sector specialist, we want to support learners and educators to deal with the impact that the pandemic is having on mental health in the classroom and workplace.

Our qualifications can support you and your learners during Mental Health Awareness Week and beyond.

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DfE 'can't prevent' schools buying half-term meal vouchers

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government's refusal to roll out the free meal voucher scheme over the May half-term break is meaningless because they are unable to prevent schools from buying vouchers, it has been claimed.

Ministers said they have "no plans to extend the scheme into future holiday periods". However, school business managers and food campaigners have pointed out that the online ordering system is unlikely to be able to check whether schools have ordered for that period.

The national scheme was launched at the end of March. Schools can order £15 weekly vouchers for children eligible for free school meals. But the system, run by Edenred, has been fraught with delays and technical glitches.

As part of efforts to speed up the supply of vouchers, the government told schools they can order vouchers up to four weeks in advance, meaning that schools can technically order vouchers to cover the May half-term break.

School business leader Hilary Goldsmith said the



system "only asks when you want the vouchers to start from, and the value to pay. You don't have to show the period you're ordering for, the number of children per family, or any detail.

"To think that someone in Whitehall is going to plough through a million orders and try to match them to any sort of national FSM list and tally them up by weeks is pretty ludicrous."

Another headteacher tweeted recently that their current four-week block of vouchers runs out the

week before half-term, "so we will order again for four weeks. If it changes to 'yes' for over half-term, great, we'll just order the next lot a week early, and if not, still have an option for a sandwich every day and our food parcels".

School food campaigner Andy Jolley said the Edenred service "certainly doesn't look equipped to check if schools are ordering vouchers for half-term. The DfE is relying on schools to be honest, but schools have no patience with DfE or Edenred any more."

Schools Week asked the DfE and Edenred whether they had any way of preventing schools from ordering vouchers for the half term period, or whether they would be penalised for doing so. The department did not respond, and Edenred referred the question back to the DfE.

The government had extended the provision over the Easter holidays, but said there are "no plans to extend the scheme into future holiday periods".

The education committee has demanded children's minister Vicky Ford set out the government's plans for entitlement to vouchers up until September, including holiday periods.

EXCLUSIVE

JOHN DICKENS | @JOHNDICKENSSW

Edenred sued government over tender-free contract

The under-fire company that runs the national free meal voucher scheme took legal action against the government almost six years ago for issuing a contract to a rival without a tender. *Schools Week* revealed the government's contract with Edenred – valued at up to £234 million – was awarded without going to tender under emergency powers introduced during covid-19.

It has emerged that in 2014 the company took the government to court for awarding its flagship tax-free childcare policy contract to the French outsourcing giant, Atos, without a public procurement process.

Edenred, which provided childcare vouchers under the scheme, said the award was "unlawful". The Supreme Court dismissed the claim in 2015.

The company has faced growing criticism in the past few weeks after the free school meal voucher scheme was swamped by demand.

Parents said their families were left to go hungry after waiting weeks for vouchers, while school staff said they could not log on to the Edenred website to check on the status

of orders.

When *Schools Week* asked Edenred two weeks ago about the lack of a tender, the company said it had been a government supplier for the past five years and had been "validated through a competitive tendering process by the Crown Commercial Service".

Public contract regulations also allowed for "urgent provision of services in response to the covid-19 pandemic".

Court documents unearthed by *Schools Week* show the company waged a legal battle with the Treasury over a £130 million contract issued to Atos. It was part of the government's flagship policy that allowed parents to open bank accounts to pay toward childcare costs, which the government then topped up.

National Savings and Investment, an executive agency of the Treasury, proposed to modify a contract it already held with Atos to include services for the new scheme - without going out to tender again.

But Edenred, with the Childcare Voucher Providers Association, claimed EU procurement law required a new tender process.

It claimed the arrangement was unlawful and in October 2014 was granted an interim order preventing the implementation of the new scheme.

However, the claim was dismissed in an expedited trial in November 2014, before the Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal in March 2015.

In July of that year the Supreme Court unanimously dismissed another appeal, and the interim order was set aside.

A government press release after the hearing described the victory as a "landmark procurement case" that would benefit "many hardworking families".

However, the new scheme has been dogged by problems. *The Daily Mirror* newspaper reported in 2017 that just 30,000 parents out of a promised 415,000 had been helped.

The Guardian then reported in 2018 that the government was accused of failing to support hard-pressed families after a £600 million underspend on its tax-free scheme was returned to the Treasury.

Edenred refused to comment.

News

Legal challenge to emergency SEND powers



SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

The government is facing a legal challenge after temporarily “relaxing” the duty of councils to provide support for SEND pupils during the coronavirus outbreak.

A notice at the end of April told councils they would only need to show “reasonable endeavours” to fulfill their duty in pupils’ education, health and care plans (EHCPs) during May.

The new powers also remove requirements to meet certain timescales around needs assessments, planning and review processes of plans until September 25.

As *Schools Week* previously reported, lawyers had warned the emergency powers would “most certainly” lead to legal challenges.

Now Polly Sweeney, a partner at Rook Irwin Sweeney, and Steve Broach, a barrister at 39 Essex Chambers, have sent a letter before claim to Gavin Williamson, the education secretary.

Acting on behalf of a young person, supported by her mother, they have asked Williamson to “urgently confirm he will withdraw the notice and amendment regulations with immediate effect”.

The girl, Amber, is unable to attend school because of the pandemic. She hopes to start a college course in September and her EHC plan is being amended. But she and her mother are worried that she will not have the SEND support that she needs for her transition to college.

Sweeney said her client’s concerns included that “the notice undermines the core statutory entitlement for children and young people with SEND to receive the provision required to meet their special educational needs, which has been in place undisturbed for decades”.

The lawyers also claimed there was a failure to consult on the measures.

A government memorandum stated there was “no legal requirement” to consult on changes to the timescales, but that it “discussed the

principle of amending the timescales and why urgent action is needed with a range of stakeholders”.

A Department for Education spokesperson told *Schools Week* those stakeholders included the Council for Disabled Children, the National Network for Parent Carer Forums, the Association of Directors of Children’s Services and the Local Government Association.

Tulip Siddiq, the shadow minister for children and early years, has written to Vicky Ford, the children’s minister, asking what steps would prevent the amended timescales leading to “a backlog of actions that have to be taken within a very short timeframe” in September.

“Can you reassure me that the regulations will not be extended simply to avoid local authorities and health bodies having to ‘catch up’ on delayed actions all at once?”

Anne Longfield, the children’s commissioner, said she also had “serious concerns”. Whilst acknowledging “clearly not all provision for children with SEND can be delivered in the usual way”, she said that the downgrading of “key duties towards children with SEND is disproportionate to the situation”.

“The government, local authorities and clinical commissioning groups should set out their reasons and evidence for implementing or making use of the changes. The government should also publish as soon as possible an assessment of the impact of these changes on children’s rights.”

Ford said earlier that the emergency powers would “only be exercised for shortest period and where necessary and will be regularly reviewed”.

A Department for Education spokesperson said the temporary changes would allow councils and health services to focus on the most urgent needs.

“Local authorities, health services and education settings must continue to work together to support children and young people with SEND and their families.”

Pay-offs over furlough for Pearson

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Another exam board has offered pay-offs instead of furlough for some examiners, while committing to returning savings from unspent exam fees back to schools.

In an email to examiners, Pearson said it was not using the government’s furlough scheme because it “believes it has been put in place to protect primarily small and medium-sized business”.

In February the global education firm’s operating profit was reported as £275 million, down from £553 million in 2018.

Instead, it has offered payments to senior examiners that it says will be the equivalent to about 80 per cent of their assessment-related earnings from May to August last year.

But the company, which owns the Edexcel exam board, has not revealed how much the payment will be.

In an email seen by *Schools Week*, Edexcel told a senior examiner that it hoped the deal “strikes a balance between protecting you from the financial impact of lost earnings during this period and our commitment to return any of the costs not incurred back into schools and the education system”.

It added that the payment was the “right approach and would be, in most cases, more generous than the government furlough scheme”.

“Importantly, it will also enable you to continue to be involved in the critical work that is needed to deliver an extended autumn series this year and prepare for examination series in future years.”

Schools Week revealed earlier this month that Cambridge Assessment, which owns exam boards OCR and Cambridge International, was furloughing some of its examiners, but offering others a £250 one-off “goodwill” payment.

Meanwhile, AQA is “looking at what we can do to support [examiners] in these extraordinary circumstances” and WJEC is expecting to make an announcement by the end of the week.

A spokesperson for Pearson said: “We are working hard to define the detail of the approach to providing students with grades this summer and to fully understand how this impacts on all aspects of our fees and associated costs.”

Ofsted raps first school over Baker clause

BILLY CAMDEN

@BILLYCAMDEN

EXCLUSIVE

A school has been rapped by Ofsted for flouting the Baker clause, as the inspectorate begins to police the controversial rule.

Leicestershire-based King Edward VII Science and Sport College was rated 'inadequate' in a report published on Wednesday following an inspection in January.

While Ofsted has suspended publishing reports during the coronavirus outbreak, it does release those where permission is given by the schools, which it said was the case with King Edward.

Inspectors found, among other leadership and safeguarding issues, that the school was "not currently meeting its statutory responsibility to ensure that providers of technical qualifications and apprenticeships visit the school to inform pupils about these options".

The watchdog said leaders "do not make sure that pupils receive independent careers advice", which means students "do not feel well prepared for their next steps".

Ofsted added that leaders "must" provide pupils with "information about what technical education and apprenticeship opportunities are available



Lord Baker

in accordance with the school's legal obligations under the 'Baker' clause".

Schools Week understands this to be the first case of a school being pulled up by the inspectorate for failing the Baker clause.

Ofsted confirmed it had not found any references to the Baker clause in the reports it was able to search from the last academic year.

The controversial rule was introduced in

January 2018 and stipulates schools must ensure a range of further education providers have access to pupils from year 8 to year 13 to provide information on technical education and apprenticeships.

It became law after the government adopted an amendment to the 2017 Technical and Further Education Act, proposed by former education secretary Lord Baker, who claimed schools were "resisting" those who tried to promote more vocational courses to pupils.

The government has become increasingly concerned at non-compliance with the rule but has yet to take any meaningful action.

This has led to calls for Ofsted to assess compliance with the rule as part of a wider judgment on a schools' careers guidance.

King Edward VII Science and Sport College is an academy that teaches around 750 students aged 14 to 18.

Since Ofsted's visit in January, King Edward's has joined the Apollo Partnership Trust and appointed a new governing body.

Julia Patrick, chief executive of the Apollo Partnership Trust, said they have taken the report "very seriously and are actively reviewing it with a view to early implementation of any recommended changes".

Attempt to stop critical Ofsted report flounders

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

A school has lost an appeal to gag Ofsted from publishing a critical report after claiming falling from 'good' to 'inadequate' in three years "cannot be justified on any rational basis".

The secondary school, inspected in October last year, was granted an anonymity order in January to prevent publication of the report. However, this was just while it pursued an appeal of an earlier decision to refuse an interim injunction.

The appeal was thrown out last week by the Court of Appeal, which also refused the school permission to apply for judicial review.

The report has not yet been published. An Ofsted spokesperson said the matter was still "subject to ongoing proceedings" so it "would not be appropriate to comment further

at this time".

The judgment refers to the school as a state-funded secondary in the north of England that was rated 'good' in 2016.

The new Ofsted report was described as one of "contrasts". While acknowledging good behaviour in lessons, it also said a "large minority of pupils do not feel safe in school".

According to the judgment, the unpublished report added: "They do not feel protected from bullying. They do not believe that there is an adult they could talk to if they were worried about anything."

It also said leaders and governors "do not know that the weaknesses exist" and that pupils were concerned about the use of "homophobic and racist language" around the school. When staff heard such language it was "not always challenged".

The school's lawyer said that dropping from 'good' to 'inadequate' in three years "cannot

be justified on any rational basis", claiming that Ofsted failed "to maintain a dialogue" with school leaders.

The lawyer also argued positive comments on classroom behaviour were "incompatible" with the suggestion that a "large minority of pupils do not feel safe".

"Unexplained inconsistencies and unjustified comments" could be attributed to the inspection team's "reliance on the unsubstantiated views of a minority of pupils".

But in the judgment Lord Justice Lindblom said "dissatisfaction with the findings and conclusions of the inspection report does not, of itself, amount to a demonstration of irrationality". He said there was "no proper basis" that the inspectors failed to maintain a "proper dialogue". There was "nothing to stop" the school communicating its criticism of the report and publicising the measures it had taken since.

CEO leaves trust 12 months after probe

JOHN DICKENS
@JOHNDICKENSSW

A trust chief executive who threatened to “deal with” a whistleblower has left his post, more than a year after the launch of an investigation into his comments.

Victoria Academies Trust (VAT) said it had agreed to terminate the contract of Andrew Morrish as it was the “most efficient use of resources and time” that would have been spent on “subsequent proceedings”.

Morrish was suspended after *Schools Week* revealed that he told staff in February last year he “flicked away” safeguarding complaints made by a whistleblower at Birchen Coppice Primary Academy in Kidderminster.

He had also threatened to uncover and “deal with” the anonymous whistleblower who he said had behaved in a “treacherous”, “underhand” and “pathetic” way.

Morrish was suspended and an independent investigation launched.

The trust said this week the former chief executive had resigned, with effect from December 31 last year.

A statement from Gurinder Josan, the chair of trustees at VAT, said: “The trust has agreed to a termination of Andrew Morrish’s employment by mutual agreement because it will be the most efficient use of resources and time that would otherwise be expended on the continuance of any subsequent proceedings. In doing so, the trust confirms a payment in lieu of notice has been made to the CEO.

“The trust thanks Andrew Morrish for his 14 years’ service and his role in establishing the trust, and the work that has been done to improve the life chances of the children in our schools.”

VAT would not reveal details of the payment. The former chief executive had been suspended on full pay.

Morrish did not respond to a request for comment. He tweeted last week he was “moving on to pastures new”, adding: “It’s been a pleasure being part of such a great journey, but new challenges await. Thank you to all of you who have supported and encouraged me over the years.”



Andrew Morrish

Exposed: CEO who vowed to ‘deal with’ whistleblower

- Academies chief boasted of ‘flicking away’ safeguarding concerns
- Trust boss slammed ‘treacherous’ staff member during ‘witch hunt’ tirade
- Calls for better whistleblower protection, as conflict revealed over LA probe

He is now listed as an associate of the Forum Strategy, a membership organisation for academy trust chief executives.

Morrish founded VAT in January 2014. He had been executive headteacher of two of its eight primary schools.

Schools Week reported last year that Morrish had spoken to staff at Birchen Coppice after an employee wrote to Ofsted raising issues of safeguarding, trust expenditure and treatment of staff.

While reading out excerpts of the letter, Morrish told staff that he had narrowed the whistleblower down to “around 14 people”, adding: “Even though it’s got ‘anonymous’, I am determined to find out who is behind it. And whoever is behind it, I’ll deal with.”

The trust’s whistleblowing policy says staff “must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way”. Anyone who did “will be subject to disciplinary action”.

VAT said Morrish was “subject of an independent investigation and disciplinary hearing during which he was suspended as a neutral act”. It did not state the outcome of the investigation.

Annual accounts published this year said



that Charlotte Davis, its former executive headteacher, stepped down in August following an investigation.

Schools Week understands that some of the whistleblower’s complaints related to Davis. The trust would not comment further, and the accounts said she was given three months’ pay. No disciplinary action was taken.

When contacted for comment, Davis insisted she left the trust for health reasons and was not aware of an investigation.

VAT said this week it had received three anonymous complaints in 2019. These were “fully investigated by the trust and found to be without foundation”.

It said Ofsted and the Education and Skills Funding Agency were said to be “entirely satisfied” with the trust’s response.

Speed read

Report uncovers 'cold spots' in AP provision

A new report from the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) into alternative provision (AP) reveals areas in which pupils have a "poor-to-zero" chance of achieving good educational outcomes. We look at the key findings

1 Educational outcomes in AP 'significantly poorer'

The average academic results for AP pupils who sit maths and English GCSE are "significantly" worse than the results of their contemporaries in mainstream, the report says.

During the past three years, it found that only 4 per cent of pupils educated in state-maintained AP achieved a grade 9-4 in those subjects, compared with 64 per cent across all state schools.

In 13 local authorities, no pupil achieved the benchmark.

Just over half (54 per cent) of all pupils who completed key stage 4 in state-maintained AP over the past three years were recorded as sustaining a positive destination, compared with 94 per cent of their mainstream peers.



2 'Huge' disparity between north and south

The CSJ think-tank, which was founded by Iain Duncan Smith, the former Conservative secretary of state for work and pensions, said that where a pupil lived "fundamentally changed" the nature of the AP offered.

It said that one in 50 pupils in the north east achieved a basic pass in maths and English, compared with one in 12 in outer London.

On pupil destinations, those in outer London still had the best outcomes compared with other regions, but there was not such a distinct north-south divide.



3 No qualified AP teachers in three areas

The latest workforce census shows out of 5,170 teachers at state-maintained APs, 17 per cent were unqualified – about 900 teachers.

Of these, only 13 per cent were on the route to qualified teacher status.

In mainstream schools, 8 per cent of teachers were unqualified; 13 per cent in special schools.

And in three local authorities – Bedford, East Sussex and Hartlepool – there were no qualified teachers in AP.

However, in 26 councils all teachers in state-maintained AP were qualified.



4 More pupils in lower-rated schools

Nearly one in five pupils was in an AP school deemed "requires improvement" or "inadequate", compared with one in eight in mainstream and only one in 20 in special schools.

In AP, 13 per cent of schools were outstanding – but only 8 per cent of pupils in AP were educated in them.

Fourteen per cent of mainstreams schools were outstanding, but 16 per cent of students attended them. Thirty per cent of special schools had the highest rating, educating 33 per cent of pupils.



5 And there may be more cold spots

The five "cold spots" were Tameside, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea, Newcastle and Sheffield.

But CSJ warned that there may be more as meaningful data – such as attendance, GCSE results and post-16 destinations – was available for fewer than one in two AP pupils in almost half – 69 of 151 – of local authorities.

The report warned data must be improved to "avoid vulnerable learners falling through the cracks of our education system".

Cath Murray, AP lead at CSJ, said there was "very poor data" on pupils who were not recorded on the main school census, but were instead captured on the AP census, such as unregistered or independent APs.

There were also problems with tracking data of "dual-rolled" pupils where a mainstream school had commissioned places for them directly, but they had not been permanently excluded.



6 How can things be improved?

The report called for a string of changes, including an "AP system improvement fund" to be piloted in the "cold spots", and a national fair funding formula for AP and special educational needs pupils.

The government should also consider expanding quality AP providers by setting up satellite sites or free schools to raise standards.

A Department for Education spokesperson said it was taking forward an "ambitious programme of action on school behaviour" and would "rapidly improve the availability of good alternative provision schools".



CREATING MENTALLY HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Once again, CACHE is supporting Mental Health Awareness Week, which runs 18th-24th May.

The importance of this week has been amplified by the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced the country to make huge adjustments to their normal routines and see very little of friends and family, both of which can have a huge impact on an individual's mental wellbeing.

This year's campaign focuses on the theme of kindness, which is something we could all do with a little of right now.

Did you know?

National mental health charity, [Mind](#), estimates that approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year.

Focusing on education specifically, recent research published by the [Education Support charity](#) shows that 75% of all education staff have faced physical or mental health issues in the last two years, citing workload and work-life balance as the top reasons. As a result, 53% have considered leaving the profession. That's a staggering figure and emphasises a real need to protect and retain those working in education to ensure our education system, and those within it, can continue to thrive.

However, it's not just those working in education that need support. Statistics from the [Mental Health Foundation](#) show that 1 in 10 children and young people have experienced mental ill health, with 70% then not receiving the appropriate treatment and interventions.

With these figures in mind, it's worth noting that although the overall numbers



of those suffering from a diagnosable mental health condition hasn't changed significantly in recent years, statistics show that the way people are coping with mental illness is getting worse, so it's imperative we raise awareness and open up conversations to remove the stigma and encourage understanding. In doing so we can improve the lives of millions of people.

Supporting mental health in education

As the UK's leading sector specialist in health qualifications, CACHE supports the initiative to make mental health a priority, for both learners and those working in education. We aim to highlight the growing need for adequate mental health knowledge and support for teachers, so that they can lead with confidence and nurture positive mental health and wellbeing in children and young people.

We offer a broad range of mental health qualifications, some that are suitable for online delivery, as well as our **new suite of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (HE) qualifications which have been developed to support schools to meet 100% of the government guidance for compulsory RSE and HE from September 2020**. These qualifications aim to equip teachers with the knowledge to actively support learners, and arm them with the knowledge they need at an early age to succeed.

Visit our website for more information on our new suite of [RSE and HE qualifications](#), or to find out how we're [supporting mental health](#) across the sector.

cache

EDITORIAL

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Schools shouldn't carry the can for ministers' ill-thought-out plans

The government's plan to reopen schools before summer could cause more problems than it solves.

Schools were promised a "comprehensive plan" to reopen schools this week.

Instead, they've witnessed the chaotic unravelling of what looks like an ill-informed and increasingly fractious proposal by government to get some pupils back in the classroom from next month.

The week didn't start well: leaders had to wait 24 hours after Boris Johnson told the nation schools would reopen for any actual details of how it would work.

It turned out to be vague and uninspiring - with the admission that young pupils are unable to observe social distancing.

But what has caused the most concern was the lack of any scientific evidence over the impact of opening schools.

Staff are scared. They are worried about the risk to themselves and their families, but also the risk to their pupils and their families.

The government insists it is guided by science, so why not show them the evidence?

Ministers should have worked with the profession to get them onside, earn their trust.

Instead, they didn't bother to consult with unions

over when to reopen - or which year groups should return.

The government needed to inspire confidence in its plans. Instead the education secretary dismissed concerns as "scaremongering".

Just hours later, the department's own chief scientific adviser admitted he hadn't even assessed how effective the government's guidance was to reopen schools, and that he didn't know the transmission rates of children.

Meanwhile, unions threaten legal action, headteachers face disputes with staff and the worries of anxious parents, those pupils who can't return to school are told they'll miss out on home learning, and some in the national press push the argument teachers are work-shy cowards.

But what happens next?

As ever, it looks like the burden will fall on the already worn-out shoulders of school leaders.

Headteachers know their schools, their staff and their pupils better than anyone. It won't be an easy decision, but they have the talent as leaders of organisations to take charge and make the right decision for their schools.

If they don't believe it's safe to open, they shouldn't be expected to.

SCHOOLS WEEK



Get in touch.

CONTACT:
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What does an inspectorate do when it can't inspect?

Terry Pearson

For sure the openness with which Ofsted has responded to this feature is welcome, although in fairness we shouldn't expect the inspectorate to behave in any other way.

It may appear, at face value, that Ofsted is responding well to the challenging circumstances yet a close look at the statistics does raise some concerns.

We might ask if staffing a single academy group helpline is appropriate redeployment for highly qualified and experienced HMI. Whilst many call centre staff across the UK have been laid off, it is not difficult to anticipate that those that haven't would be delighted to be receiving HMI pay at this time.

One of the things that is clearly lacking from the inspectorate's response is a bit of creative thinking. Surely the most appropriate consideration is how Ofsted resources can be used most effectively during this challenging time.

It has one of the largest databases of empirical findings from classroom and school inspections in the world. Thankfully, Ofsted Inspectors and a small number of newly appointed HMI have returned to their schools and are drawing on their knowledge of inspection findings alongside their skills and expertise to support teachers in the rapid development of unprecedented changes to their schools' curriculum.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary action. As we move into the eighth week of the shutdown of schools, it really is time for Ofsted to step up and seriously contemplate how the 180 under-employed full-time HMI can make the best use their expertise to support schools in providing a quality experience for their pupils.

Coronavirus: Primaries could reopen to some pupils on June 1, says Johnson

Ann Mortimer

Absolutely incredulous that the government should suggest reception and year 1 pupils return to school with year 6. I have taught reception and year 1. These children are too young to follow social distancing measures. They are active learners, and do not and should not sit separately at desks, surrounded by acrylic screens.

During the summer transition term September's intake will

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Julie Pierce, @KennyJulieKenn1

Coronavirus: Largest heads' union says it wasn't consulted over June 1 return plan

Headteachers are being placed in an impossible position. Yet again they are between a rock and hard place – when all they want is the best for the children, families and staff in their care.



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

be visiting, displacing the current class who would normally move on to meet their new teacher. This is also a period of maximum parental involvement. Children in reception and year1 are brought into school by parents who will also be at increased risk of catching coronavirus.

83 per cent of heads say inability to implement social distancing would prevent pupils' return

Sarah Cutts

The problem with trying to social distance in schools is that they are over-crowded institutions.

As an early years' teacher in a reception class of 30, it would be impossible to enforce social distancing. Even if we allowed 15 children into school on one day, I would be spending most of my time getting the children to wash their hands regularly, and cleaning equipment and resources that they have used.

It may be possible if schools allow six children into the class on one day, so that all 30 children have had one day of teaching in school by the end of the week.

Summer schools could be seen as 'punishment' for disadvantaged pupils, heads warn

Chris Shaw, @Wolfy_CES

Parents and carers need support. Schools need to meet them halfway. Most are only supporting minimal numbers of key worker kids now, so if they can offer summer holiday support, they should. Parents won't be getting holidays.

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**SCHOOLS
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Feature

The Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERG.J



“Finance aside, we decided it was the morally right thing to do”

Jess Staufenberg meets a familiar headteacher for whom 'sanctuary school' status is a career high-point

Tom Leverage, executive principal at Cardinal Wiseman School, has many strings to his bow. He has worked in everything from the private, state and special educational needs schools sectors before his current post at a Catholic academy in a deeply deprived part of Coventry. He moved from the well-known Ampleforth College to two more independent schools before leaving to become headteacher at a school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in Norwich and then taking another headship in the city.

Some may recognise him as the principal later employed by the Inspiration Trust, under Dame Rachel de Souza, to lead one of the trust’s most controversial and challenging takeovers in East

Anglia, the Hewett Academy. Standards rose and, a year after he left, the school was graded ‘good’. He has even had the obligatory tabloid article about his introduction of “silent corridors”.

Yet despite this rapid rise up the ranks and multiple successes, it is a small programme involving no more than 60 pupils in his current school, which he joined in 2017, that he calls, “without a doubt, the absolute high-point of my career”. It’s a study programme for refugee, asylum and migrant 16-year-olds in Coventry, all of whom have English as an additional language (EAL), and whom the local authority desperately needs school places for.

Leverage is self-effacing – a basic version of the programme existed before he arrived – but

under his leadership, and with the drive and enthusiasm of his staff, it has become a central part of the school’s work. The academy has now achieved “School of Sanctuary” status, a designation which means it offers training for staff and learning activities in the curriculum about refugee, asylum and migration issues, thereby “fostering a culture of welcome and inclusion”, particularly for those groups. But why, as a new headteacher, give yourself the extra work when your school is struggling?

“When I arrived, Cardinal Wiseman was in a really challenging place,” says Leverage. “It had been graded ‘inadequate’ for some time and there was well-publicised debt. Of course, one of the first things we did was look at the sixth-

The Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School



“This is a high-risk age for them, and they can easily be lost in the system”

A-level results day at Cardinal Wiseman School

form provision.” He and his committed head of languages, Gosia Williams, talked to the local authority and discovered Coventry was a “City of Sanctuary” for refugee families.

“The LA told us that the need for places for these pupils was just growing and growing. Finance aside, we decided it was the morally right thing to do.” A foundation course for EAL pupils within the school was scaled up to become a tailor-made, two-year course for 30 refugee and migrant pupils from Syria, Iraq, Vietnam and elsewhere beginning in year 12. “They’re some of the most vulnerable children in society.”

Although there are plans to expand the programme into year 11, Leverage is clear why its priority has to be years 12 and 13. Whereas pupils from the Middle East and elsewhere who join lower down the school soon pick up the language and acclimatise, teenagers need urgent and specific intervention, he explains. “They come as sixth-formers and then in two years they’ll be adults and they’re into the system.”

The public also treats younger pupils of 13 or 14 with more forgiveness if they don’t seem to understand how to make their way around society, he adds. “Something as familiar as getting on a bus and being told ‘just give me 20p’ can be confusing, and a member of the public will be looking at them thinking, ‘what’s going on, he’s 16 years old?’. The biggest challenge these older pupils face outside the school gates is they look like any other teenager in England. But they’re not, they’re still working it all out.”

Leverage points out that colleges, with perhaps thousands of pupils, can be especially daunting. “This is a high-risk age for them and they can easily be lost in the system.” That’s also why the programme teaches not only foundation maths and English but a “humanities” course – a kind of cultural studies offer. “The government might call it ‘British values’ but really it’s to give them a sense of identity,” says Leverage. “It’s a core programme about what you need to know about British society, like what Big Ben is, the London

Underground, what black cabs are. Black cabs were designed in Coventry and they’re an iconic symbol for everyone in Britain, but how do you make sure a Syrian war refugee will understand what that is?”

Leverage, unsurprisingly given his past work with the Inspiration Trust, introduced a “knowledge-rich” curriculum at the school. He notes the humanities course is “what E.D. Hirsch would have called the 100 things a pupil needs to know”. Once completed, the programme ensures pupils come out with at least five qualifications: in maths, English, a subject in their own language, a humanity and applied ICT. All pupils also do PSHE. According to Leverage, the programme has a 100 per cent success rate of pupils going on to education, training or employment.

The school itself has benefited from embracing cultural and linguistic diversity. Now 58.8 per cent of pupils have an ethnic minority background, 40 languages are spoken, and 42 per cent of the school has EAL. Investing heavily in

The Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School



Tom Leverage

its non-English speakers has not gone unnoticed: in 2018, Ofsted inspectors bumped the school up to a 'requires improvement' grade and said one of its strengths was that "outcomes in languages are exceptional. Pupils who join the school with limited English language skills are effectively supported by the languages department and make strong progress in a range of subjects as a result."

The school does see a small cash injection from taking in EAL pupils, but it's not huge. For the first three years after entry to a school, EAL pupils bring in £1,385 extra a year in government funding at secondary level and £515 in primary. The extra cash is welcome but "doesn't cover everything", says Leverage, particularly when some pupils arrive after the October census that determines funding. Refugee pupils need highly skilled linguists and translators to access lessons.

The struggle faced by schools supporting EAL pupils was outlined in a joint report by the University of Oxford, Unbound Philanthropy and The Bell Educational Trust published in February. It warned there is "huge variation" in attainment outcomes for pupils classed as EAL, partly because the EAL category itself is so broad. It captures both second- and third-generation ethnic minority pupils fluent in English who speak another language at home, but also "new migrants arriving in England who speak no

English at all". The authors urge the Department for Education to introduce a measure of pupils' proficiency in English (which they call PIE) so that schools can identify pupils' differing needs better. One hopes such a measure might also prompt more funding to come the way of schools like Cardinal Wiseman, which on paper has a similar proportion of EAL pupils as a typical London school while in reality having a much higher proportion who can hardly understand

"I've never seen a love of education in a pupil like it"

their teachers at all.

The only flaw I can spot in the school's programme is that the students might struggle to feel integrated into the main student body. How to tackle this?

"We changed the location of the sixth-form centre to the heart of the school, where the library used to be. It means sixth formers are in the centre of the school, it's visible to everyone and it's bubbly." The set-up encourages pupils not



Year 12 foundation group in lessons



A-level results day

to clump together and speak their first languages just with one another. "It's also aspirational for all the other pupils in the school!" adds Leverage.

He is filled with praise for the keenness of refugee and migrant pupils to educate themselves. One pupil in particular he describes as "remarkable". "He's from an area of conflict in the world and he's partially lost his sight in both eyes, so we got him a Braille machine through the local authority. When I drop in on lessons to say hello, he's there taking his notes in Braille. I've never seen a love of education in a pupil like it." For other pupils, growing up in a neighbourhood which last year ranked in the top five per cent most deprived areas, such examples will be valuable. Leverage, meanwhile, has managed to pick up the Arabic "yalla", meaning "come on" or "hurry up". Most useful for a head.

His only regret is that he doesn't know more schools with School of Sanctuary status. According to City of Sanctuary, the charity that awards the status, there are 303 Schools of Sanctuary in England. A quick analysis shows some areas have many more than others: in London, only two schools have sanctuary status, whereas Liverpool (where there is a strong Catholic community) has 37, The Wirral, 22 and Birmingham, 15. Almost a quarter have a Catholic or Church of England name.

Leverage is already looking to bring the programme to another secondary school. "I can honestly say that in all my career in teaching, this is one of the very best things I've ever done."

Routes to school improvement clearly lie in some unexpected places.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Lockdown diaries – a week in the life of...



DAVID PREECE

UCAS Co-ordinator, St Dunstan's College, Catford, south-east London

Monday, May 4

It's two weeks since our sixth form sent out a letter to students explaining what we knew and didn't know about the impact of exam cancellations on our students' future pathways. I check in on UCAS Track to find that about one-third of our students are still undecided. The team make a list of students and families to follow up with.

In the meantime, we start to make plans for how we're going to be available to help Year 13 to have other conversations, like student finance applications. I miss the more exciting and joyful discussions about accommodation, cooking skills, or even how to navigate IKEA to buy student basics without consuming your bodyweight in meatballs. Our students are becoming adults, and it's all happening so far away from normal. I miss it.

Tuesday, May 5

Attention now starts to focus on what we can do for Year 12. With open days cancelled for the foreseeable future, it seems impossible to imagine how they will start their career

journeys now. Some universities are giving virtual tours, using social media and opening their doors electronically as much as possible, but work experience is effectively a non-starter for this year. How will our prospective medical students cope?

We reach out to various medical organisations and discover a number of "virtual work experience" programmes springing up. What about those who wanted to do art foundations and experience taster courses? We are having to become experts in navigating a whole new world and it feels like one without a territory, let alone a map.

Wednesday, May 6

"Is it too late to apply to UCAS?" "What if I no longer want to do my gap year?" We'd ordinarily just have these conversations, and students and staff alike are really missing the ease and the humanity of a face-to-face drop-in. But we'd also have resolved most of these a long time ago, and uncertainty is taking its toll.

The necessary closure of university campuses means that all-important deciding factor just isn't there – the "feel" of the place.



For others, the prospect of a gap year is a completely different one now: some want to cancel their plans and go straight to university, while others feel like this offers a time to go and see the world. Some of our students who were planning to apply for 2021 entry are now trying to shift their applications.

None of us can make decisions based on anything more than the evidence we have. We can only encourage our students to be confident that it is enough.

The government's work to "fix offers" and ensure no one starts horse-trading with "conditional-unconditionals" has helped steady things, and extending offer deadlines has been positive – but students are waiting to see what changes with each new announcement.

It's chaotic. I can only imagine how universities are coping at the other end.

Thursday, May 7

Another virtual sixth-form leadership team meeting gets us to the Bank Holiday weekend.

What is our agenda for the second half-term? How can the pastoral team help support decision making? How can we get students engaging with research and making positive plans – for their mental health and well-being, as much as for their practical outcomes?

We get some webinars in the calendar and invite parents along to one, too. How can we get them to support and discuss this at home, in an already challenging environment?

As for the UCAS process, the key moments are often when it goes quiet, academically. It has been so challenging doing this at a distance and with partial information. The sense of satisfaction is still there when students make tough choices, but without any of the joy. We don't get to see and share these celebrations and decision-making moments, and they are what makes the role so wonderful.

Still, it's important we keep positive. Helping our students set their course for a brighter future helps us too.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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In the past few days, the country has been told that it will be safe for more pupils to return to school, yet the underpinning evidence and expert insight that informs this advice has not been communicated, says Nick Brook



NICK BROOK

Deputy general secretary of school leaders' union NAHT

'Number 10 needs to release its vice-like grip on the evidence'

At this critical time, government can no longer rely on the blind faith of the public, and nor should it. All evidence points to a chasm between the desire of parents for their children to return to school and the confidence that it is indeed safe to do so. There is a "confidence gap" for parents and the profession that will be hard to bridge.

To bridge the gap requires clarity of message, transparency of evidence and honesty about the actual risks involved. At present, the communications emanating from 10 Downing Street are falling well short, on all counts. It could result in schools making key decisions while completely in the dark about vital information.

Last night, the DfE published the first guidance following the announcement by the prime minister that the youngest children can start returning to school after half-term. More advice to schools is expected to follow in coming days and weeks.

Explanation of the scientific evidence behind this thinking is seriously lacking, which means schools are being asked to make an exceptionally "big bet". While there is an assertion that "thinking is underpinned by [our] understanding of the science", there is little that professionals can engage with themselves to develop a common understanding and any degree of confidence. This omission will do little to reassure colleagues, their families and parents that it is indeed safe to return in the way set out.

Yet convincing the profession and

parents that it is safe to open schools further is only half the battle. Who should return, when and how are equally relevant questions.

"Why nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 6?" are questions that have been posed to me repeatedly since the prime minister's broadcast. The guidance published this week makes little attempt to explain the rationale, and at points is confusing and almost contradictory.

for infant schools, Year 2 is also a transition year.

Unsurprisingly, what I'm hearing most is "why start with reception children? How on earth are we meant to keep reception children apart?"

The elephant in the room appears to be the absence in DfE guidance of any reference to "getting the country back to work" by freeing parents of nursery, reception and Year 1 children of childcare responsibilities. The

"Schools are being asked to make an exceptionally 'big bet'"

Educational arguments are made for why reception and Year 1 should be prioritised over other year groups, though no such arguments are made for the return of Year 6. The guidance also seems to gloss over the fact that

suspicion of many in the profession is that this is the real rationale behind prioritising the youngest.

Getting people back to work is a justifiable rationale for prioritising which pupil groups to return first.



Long-term unemployment and poverty can do as much harm to children's long-term educational and life chances as a prolonged period of absence from school. Number 10 needs to release its vice-like grip on the evidence and information. And if this is the primary driver for the government's decision, they should be honest about it and allow us to be involved in deciding the relative merits of each argument.

The government has promised transparency and yet many in the profession have been left in the dark.

Assuming the government presents clear evidence to state that pupils can return safely to school, we must also understand the motivation behind their prioritisation of year groups, in order that schools can plan appropriate solutions.

It appears that schools are being given a degree of flexibility to determine how to open to more pupils. This is welcome, unless we find that there was a hidden right and wrong answer, all along. For example, if it is government's primary ambition to get parents back to work, business groups tell us clearly that rota systems (half-days; one day on, one day off; one week on, one week off) will be of little use to any employer. Yet such models may well be very effective solutions to engage maximum number of pupils and re-engage with vulnerable pupils.

My message to government is to trust the profession with the information they need with which to do the right thing. No school leader wants classrooms empty for one day longer than they have to be, but we need to work together with openness and honesty on the route out of this, and to do that, Number 10 needs to release its vice-like grip on the evidence and information.

Opinion

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EMMA KNIGHTS

Chief executive, National Governance Association

Governors will need more flexibility as schools reopen

As the NGA launches its 2020 governance survey, chief executive, Emma Knights praises the transformation of boards' practices and warns of more challenges ahead

A revolution in the way governing board meetings are held has been going on under the radar - as with much of governance. But it has been a considerable change in a short period, not just for the volunteers who are now using the same virtual platforms many of us are at work, but also for their professional advisers, clerks.

A minority of governing boards have not yet met virtually, and as government advice suggests face-to-face meetings will not be advisable for some time, they will need to have a go. Governance must continue.

Boards are sometimes characterised as fuddy-duddy amateurs, but moving meetings online is not without its glitches. Criticism doesn't move anyone forward, and it ignores the fact that governors and trustees have been shown in their hundreds of thousands to be ready and able to step up and adapt when required, continuing to govern from their

homes in the interests of their pupils and communities. The sooner that's done, the sooner they can get to the more difficult decisions of what

“ All governing bodies will need to give virtual meetings a go

business to keep on the agenda.

In the first seven weeks of the covid-19 crisis, NGA advised boards to pull back to the essentials, beginning their meetings with business-critical decisions such as approving the budget and ratifying a school or trust leadership appointment. It's been impressive to see leadership recruitment continuing virtually during this period. However, as virtual governance continues, boards and executives will now be working out what else needs scrutiny or decision.

Monitoring will be key in the coming weeks. There will be the ongoing challenge of maintaining the required provision for vulnerable children and the children of key workers, potentially adapting provision for a growing number of pupils from June 1 onwards, and ensuring continuity of education for



pupils who are not in school. These will have to be balanced against the needs and welfare of the workforce.

And in terms of welfare, the wellbeing of school leaders must continue to be a top consideration.

preparing for a probable reopening and for the learning loss and the recovery needs of pupils come September.

More than ever, the education sector needs to hear from those who make the strategic decisions in schools and trusts about the challenges they are facing; the NGA has launched its 2020 governance survey for that purpose.

The governors and trustees we have consulted so far overwhelmingly agree that a further return to school should be driven by the welfare and wellbeing of communities, families and pupils, including safeguarding and mental health. They tell us they need to understand the purpose of the return and the science behind the decision if they are to undertake their role effectively in ensuring the health and safety of all concerned and support school leaders in communicating the case to staff and parents.

The fundamentals of good governance don't change: it must be ethical and accountable - listening to the voices of all stakeholders - as well as effectively managed.

The NGA's 2020 Governance Survey can be accessed here:
<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/NGAsurveysw/>

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Zero Tolerance: A Novel

Author: The Old Grey Owl

Publisher: Matador Publishing

Reviewer name: Mark Aston, teacher, The British School of Nanjing

The American philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues for the purpose of literature as a means to explore moral questions. For her, the novel is a “paradigm of moral activity”, permitting us to see overlapping truths play out and interact from the standpoint of observer. These are not just good stories; they are thought experiments in morality.

The satirical novel occupies a more problematic space. It is less easy to regard it as a dispassionate evaluation of competing truths. It is a product of passion. It runs the risk of descending into a kind of “literature of hate”, in which characters are saddled with ad hominem traits that are obviously designed to either win you over to them or repel them as far from you as possible.

Zero Tolerance presents us with two such contrasting characters: the antagonist, Camilla Everson, is an ambitious, uncompromising headteacher with a reputation for turning schools from underachieving wells of anti-promise into the kinds of high-performing, behaviourally pristine schools that we like to froth about at both ends of the political spectrum. By contrast, Rick Westfield is a no-less ambitious, but more obviously nuanced protagonist. A deputy headteacher, he is the model of high expectations infused with a sensitivity to pastoral complexities. The takeover of his school, Fairfield High, by a multi-academy trust forces Westfield to live by his principles. In the face of a regime of

uniform-checking, silent corridors and highly questionable approaches to exam preparation, Westfield gradually finds himself with no choice but to put himself in harm’s way for the good of his conscience, his colleagues, his community and, most crucially, one of his former students, Karim – a Syrian refugee refused a place in the school by the comically Machiavellian Everson for fear that having a student with “needs” would jeopardise the school’s results.

Zero Tolerance is clearly the product of experience. I have not taught in the UK for over ten years and frequently found myself wanting to contact the author after bouts of reading to ask them questions like “Does this really happen in schools?” and “Could a member of SLT really be this tone-deaf, careerist and without principle?”

In the end, this novel won’t change minds. Those who already experience schools in the way described by the anonymous author will lap up the almost burlesque caricature of the Cruella de Ville that is Everson (she is described as such during a pleasingly terrifying learning walk of the school). But, to the detriment of a potentially much wider readership, *Zero Tolerance* does not allow us to appreciate Everson’s motivations in any way. This may well be based on the author’s

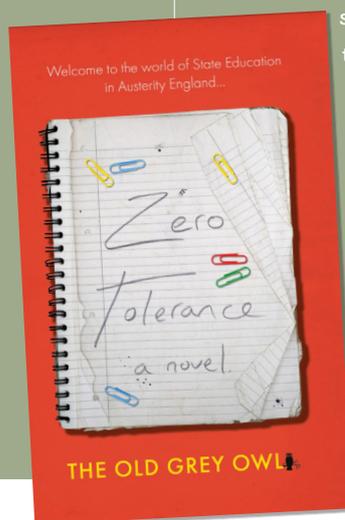
experience, but it means that we miss out on a broader debate about how we got to this place of austerity, division and inhumanity in the first place. A toxic combination of political and personal opportunism allied to economic decline and a prolonged national identity crisis may very well be the causes, but pitching a novel with too clear a distinction between good and evil makes it much harder to win over those who might dismiss its message. They will simply see it as no more than a lengthy ad hominem attack on what some believe is a legitimate attempt to improve social mobility by focusing, with Sauron-esque relentlessness, on the pursuit of academic achievement in spite of economic and social “excuses”.

That criticism aside, this is the edu-Dickens that we have been crying out for since *Hard Times*. Not since watching *A Very Peculiar Practice* – an equally caustic satire of encroaching privatisation of the NHS in the late 1980s – have I felt so politically energised by a cultural product. If the malpractices engaged in this novel are anywhere near truth, then we have

streamlined and simplified the English education system into nothing less than a Victorian workhouse, with all its attendant, oft-ignored rules and regulations and lack of meaningful (because often corrupt) oversight.

But, of course, this is only a novel, isn’t it? It is just a story, isn’t it?

Isn’t it?



Reviews



Penny Rabiger takes over our Blogs of the Week slot once every half-term to point to the best of the education podcasts

Boys Don't Try

For some no-nonsense discussion around boys, masculinities, class and how these play out in schools, here's a podcast by the authors of the book *Boys Don't Try*. The second episode explores the impact that disadvantage has, and how this will be more acute during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. But it's not all bad for boys, there are some surprising ways that learning at home may release boys from the shackles of masculinities that can hold them back at school when around their peers.

Positive Negative

People react differently to different situations. This podcast finds people from around the world, in a range of professions, situations and states of mind, who are willing to talk about the positive-negative experiences they are having right now. Series 1 centres of course around Covid-19. It would be remiss of me to not mention the fact that episode seven features yours truly, but the episode I would like to highlight is entitled "What kind of people



do we want them to be?". The conversation with a secondary PE teacher, James, is an insightful take on how adjusting to remote teaching and learning is impacting many teachers' fundamental ideas about the purpose and form of education.

Things Unseen

This next podcast is also on the theme of positives from negatives. In the episode I've chosen, journalist Remona Aly and Cambridge University Islam scholar Abdal Hakim Murad (also known as Dr Tim Winter) discuss "Ramadan in Lockdown". While it isn't directly about education, many teachers will be keenly aware that it is Ramadan this month, and may wonder how it feels for their students and their families to try to spend time fasting and occupied with spiritual devotion, charity and community activity when for the very first time, they and many of the world's 1.8 billion Muslims are spending the month in lockdown. If, as suggested in the podcast, this Ramadan can turn into an opportunity

to re-evaluate how British Muslims are seen in society more widely, then greater awareness in our schools and classrooms seems a good place to start.

PiXL Leadership Bookclub

There has been a lot of focus on leadership during the current crisis, and one thing that's apparent is that women leaders seem to be doing pretty well. This might be in part due to the fact that people who look beyond the usual tramlines of experience are likely to learn more about what works. This new podcast series, produced by successful podcasters We Are In Beta, is a collaboration with PiXL's Rachel Johnson. Each week, Johnson will be joined by two school leaders to discuss one non-education book that can change the way we think, teach and lead. Leadership is a transferable skill, so there are many lessons to be learned from others and from other sectors. I love a good hybrid, and there's a stellar line-up of diverse and exciting guests, so this promises to be good!

In Depth, Out Loud

As a "roadmap" out of lockdown begins to emerge (for what it's worth), it's a good opportunity to centre some of my listening choices around what the future might look like. The Conversation provides really good written think pieces at the best of times, and this podcast series doesn't disappoint. The episode I have chosen is called "What Will The World Be Like After Coronavirus: Four Possible Futures". We seldom think of what and how we teach as being shaped by political economy. This podcast will have you making those links and imagining four possible futures for our schools. Just like the economic models it describes, teachers will find that in terms of education "versions of all of these futures are perfectly possible, if not equally desirable."

Research

This term the Chartered College of Teaching will regularly review the evidence on a school-related theme. Contact them on Twitter @CharteredColl if you have a topic you would like them to cover

Why teacher expertise matters – now, and when schools reopen fully

Cat Scutt, director of education and research, Chartered College of Teaching

The closure of schools to most pupils is a key part of the approach to tackling the Covid-19 pandemic and fully reopening them too soon risks not just teachers, pupils and their families, but also a second peak of infection. But as the Chartered College of Teaching’s recent review of evidence around school closures highlights, the pandemic will have substantial academic and social consequences for children and young people. Schools are working round the clock to try to mitigate these, from access to learning to provision of food and basic resources.

Focusing on academic outcomes alone, the NWEA’s projections of the impact of school closures are stark. They are based on the idea that the loss of learning this year compared to a “normal” year will be a combination of learning missed due to closures and the “summer learning loss” effect. Research on summer learning loss is contentious, but it is often suggested that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds lose more learning over the break than their less disadvantaged peers.

Of course, summer learning loss is different to the current context. Schools are still providing learning opportunities; however, we know these are not being accessed evenly. The Sutton Trust found that pupils in more deprived schools were less likely to complete work set, more likely to submit work of a lower quality than usual, and less likely to have devices to access learning.

So pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are potentially losing out on multiple



fronts. If we want to ensure they are able to learn while schools are (partially) closed, internet access is clearly key. The Department for Education has made steps to provide devices and broadband for disadvantaged pupils in some year groups, but unless, as Teach First have suggested, this is extended to *all* pupils from low-income families, some pupils will continue to miss learning. Of course, having access does not guarantee learning will happen, but it’s an important starting point.

Support from parents is also critical. The Sutton Trust found that middle-class parents and those with higher levels of education were more likely to feel confident supporting their children’s learning – and we need to address this confidence gap.

Janet Goodall has comprehensively set out how to support parents to support their children, and highlights the importance of communicating that their role is to value and support learning, not to replace a teacher.

And teachers are at the heart of everything. In normal times, quality

of teaching is the in-school factor that makes the biggest difference to pupils, and is particularly important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is true during lockdown, too; unsurprisingly, the Education Endowment Foundation’s evidence review on remote learning found that teaching quality matters more than the delivery method used.

And while ideas of how to support disadvantaged pupils such as Education Policy Institute’s suggestion of harnessing an army of volunteers, or Teach First’s support for summer schools may have merit, teacher expertise will continue to be key when schools reopen fully.

Teachers will face further challenges as pupils return. Aside from variation in what and how much learning pupils have done, there will be pupils who are still unable to attend in person because of shielding measures. This means teaching most pupils face-to-face, while supporting some at a distance. There may also be ongoing absence due to illness, which has a well-documented impact on attainment.

On top of academic concerns, teachers will also face wider demands. Domestic violence and bereavement are just two things that some pupils may have experienced when they return. While teachers can play a role – alongside other specialists – in supporting pupils, it’s crucial to be mindful of the limits to what they can reasonably be expected to do. They’ll need support and training in these areas, too, and awareness that their own mental health may be affected in turn.

So, if we want to provide the best possible support for our pupils, we need to focus on providing the best possible support for teachers. That means investing in their professional development, giving them time, and – crucially – trusting and supporting them.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

SATURDAY

Week in Westminster mourned the departure of the outspoken academies minister Lord Agnew, who left the role earlier this year (tbh, we actually mourned the fabulous column inches provided by his fabulous outbursts).

But fear not – another knight (Lord) in shining armour has appeared! Welcome to Lord Adonis, whose comments this week mark his third appearance in a row on our hallowed page.

The Twitter-happy former schools minister griped on Saturday: "I'm not, you may know, a fan of Johnson's. But there's too much unconstructive criticism. Judging how to open up, safeguarding health, jobs/education & family life together, is a hellish challenge.

"For each criticism, why don't we offer a constructive suggestion?"

I mean, LOL.

This is from the man who a couple of weeks earlier tweeted how "many schools" are not providing adequate online learning for their pupils.

But that's fine, he made this criticism constructively, right? Er, no. He chose to tag in the chief inspector of schools, Amanda Spielman, urging her to name and shame those poor staff who might have struggled to build a virtual school in just a few weeks (with F all help from the government).

MONDAY

Not to be outdone, though, the Department for Education stole the "irony of the week" award. First, they inexplicably made heads wait 24

hours to see the actual guidance on how they would be expected to reopen schools, announced by prime minister Boris Johnson to the nation on Sunday night.

Then, said guidance told leaders they must "communicate early" with contractors, including cleaners and caterers to make sure they are prepared to support the reopening plans!

TUESDAY

Ministers have spent the weeks since the national school meals voucher scheme went haywire trying to pretend it was only a fallback, probably hoping the claim will make people believe the technical problems and delays were the result of unexpected demand.

But after *Schools Week* revealed earlier this month that supplier Edenred knew exactly what was coming, we had further confirmation that the fall-back claims were all a load of hokum.

Paul Whiteman, the NAHT's general secretary and not a man known to mince his words, was asked about the fiasco during a revealing session with the commons education committee.

The union boss told MPs he left conversations with the DfE on the voucher scheme "with the very clear impression that this was the preferred method for the delivery of vouchers... and it should supersede any local arrangements, other than if schools were still cooking in their own kitchen".

Straight-talking union boss or mealy-mouthed ministers. Who to believe?!

Ofsted's social media team deserves a pat on the back for the way it handled speculation about its plans to reboot

inspections this week.

Responding to a tweet asking if they were "secretly hatching plans with the DFE to relaunch inspections on the 2nd of June", the watchdog simply replied: No.

WEDNESDAY

While the world is changing in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, it was heartening today to be informed it was the Immovable Nick Gibb's 10th anniversary as schools minister.

Apart from a brief hiatus spent on the back benches during the middle of the coalition years, the die-hard supporter of a knowledge-rich curriculum and no-excuses behaviour policy has been shaping education in his own image for the best part of a decade.

Happy Nick Gibb Day: times tables tests for everyone!

THURSDAY

Edenred, which runs the government's trouble-hit free school meal voucher scheme, appears to be using AI to increase its engagement on social media. Its account has been retweeting those who had tagged it in tweets saying "thanks for the mention". Aw, how lovely.

Except a brief flick through said mentions reveals a different story. One tweeter had tagged the firm in a tweet to say "it would have been nicer if you answered the phone rather than leave me on hold for over an hour".

Another questioned why the firm had taken a month to reply to her message, while she was left with no idea when vital food vouchers would arrive.

huish
RICHARD HUISH



HEAD TEACHER

Salary: Group size 6, starting salary L21 to L35 (£67,183 to £94,669)

Contract: Permanent

Start Date: September 2020

The Taunton Academy is seeking to appoint an exceptional, driven, dynamic and inspirational leader to build on the academy's many strengths and further develop our vision of delivering high class education. We are an ambitious Church of England secondary school based in the beautiful county town of Somerset.

Sponsored by the Richard Huish Education Group, the Multi-Academy Trust model offers the school potential to retain its unique characteristics and to maintain its own local governing body; whilst also offering the Head Teacher a high degree of autonomy in the work of leading the school, with the freedom to focus on teaching and learning.

We are looking for an exceptional leader who:

- Will demonstrate strategic vision and have a track record of exceptional leadership and management experience
- Is dynamic, motivational and has a proven record of delivering high quality teaching and learning
- Is resilient and financially astute with an unparalleled understanding of education and the challenges in developing schools
- Has an aspirational mindset, leading by example in the pursuit of high standards and levels of achievement
- Is able to understand, value and develop the values of the school and wider Trust
- Is an excellent, engaging communicator who will develop strong relationships with children, parents and the wider community
- Can embrace and relish the opportunities available for collaboration and strive for excellence within the Huish group of schools.

Application process:

If you would like to discuss this role further please contact The Richard Huish Trust CEO johna@richuish.ac.uk Further details and an application pack can be found on the vacancies pages of the school website www.thetauntonacademy.com or the Richard Huish Education Group www.huish.education

Please complete the application form and a covering letter in which you explain how your values, knowledge, experience and skills/abilities meet the requirements of the Job Description.

Please return your completed application to: The HR Manager at Richard Huish College, South Road, Taunton, Somerset TA1 3DZ or vacancies@huish.ac.uk

Closing Date for applications:

Friday 29th May 2020, 12 noon

The Richard Huish Trust is committed to Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful candidate will be subject to all necessary pre-employment checks including Enhanced DBS, Prohibition check,, qualifications, identity and right to work. We actively promote equal opportunities and welcome applications from all sections of the community.

All applicants will be required to provide two suitable references.

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
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