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Private schools team up with debt collector to chase unpaid fees



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Ministers unlikely to deliver on £350m tutor cash promise

- £140m of pledged funding still sitting unallocated in DfE coffers
- The cash, to fund catch-up tutors, could be rolled over to next year
- 'The government has over-promised and under-delivered, again'

JOHN DICKENS | @JOHNDICKENS

EXCLUSIVE

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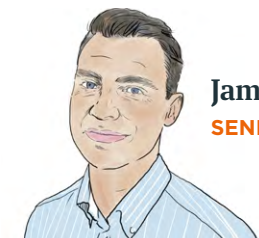
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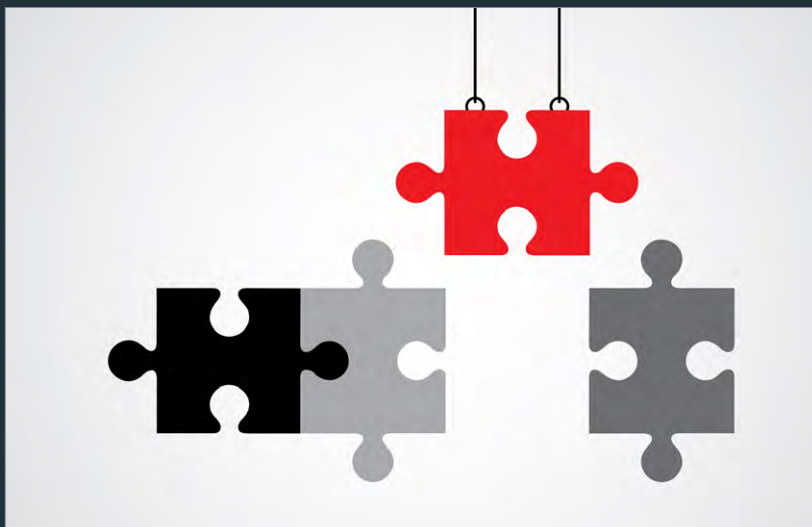


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Untouched £140m in tuition catch-up fund

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENS

EXCLUSIVE

The government is unlikely to deliver on its promise to provide £350 million in tuition catch-up cash this year.

A Schools Week investigation has established that nearly £140 million – 40 per cent – of the promised funding remains unspent.

It's understood there are plans under consideration for the unspent cash to fund the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) for future years, despite a pledge from the education secretary that the £350 million would fund tutoring support for 2020-21 only.

Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said it was "yet more sleight of hand from government. Again, they've over-promised but under-delivered."

When asked to confirm the funding would be spent this year, a spokesperson for the Department for Education would only say that further information about the NTP would be set out following the spending review.

They would not explain why the funding – announced to much fanfare in June – was now reliant on the next spending review. The delayed review is now down for next month.

The NTP will provide subsidised tuition for disadvantaged pupils as part of a government £1 billion catch-up package. Schools will use the remaining £650 million to pay for catch-up programmes.

Gavin Williamson said the NTP would be "delivered throughout the next academic year, bringing long-term reform to the educational sector that will protect a generation of children from the effects of this pandemic".

But Schools Week has established just £211 million of the cash has been allocated. The largest chunk, £96 million, will be paid in grants to institutions to provide catch-up for 16 to 19-year-olds.

About £106 million will go towards the two strands of the NTP for schools. The bulk, £76 million, will fund Tuition Partners, an approved set of companies that will offer the subsidised tuition. Another £30 million will fund 1,000 academic mentors based in schools to provide "intensive and frequent support" for pupils most in need.

Nine million pounds has been set aside for



early years language intervention programmes. That leaves £139 million unspent.

The programme has already come under fire for its sluggishness when it emerged in July it would not be fully operational until the spring term.

The Guardian also revealed earlier this month that just 150 of the 1,000 academic mentors will be in schools by the end of the year – the rest are due in January and February. The programme is due to end in July.

The first approved tutoring "partners" will be announced at the start of next month.

Tom Richmond, the founder of the EDSK think tank, said schools will want to see the promised funding being "handed out as a matter of urgency".

However, Teach First, which is providing the academic mentor programme, said it wasn't expecting any more funding.

A spokesperson for the NTP partners programme, led by the Education Endowment Foundation, would only say the programme "has the potential to support schools in the long run... but we don't know what the outcomes of the spending review will be at this stage".

It is unclear how the DfE would allocate any remaining cash to schools – particularly coming midway through the academic year.

Richmond said that if investing in the NTP got "wrapped up within a much bigger conversation about the department's future budget", there was a risk the funding could get diverted or not materialise quickly enough. This would be "desperately disappointing" for everyone involved in the programme.

But John Nichols, president of The Tutors' Association, said providing the cash over a longer period of time would be fine, adding: "It's how the money is spent rather than how fast. Providing good quality provision is the priority."

The chaos surrounding the announcement of the funding earlier this year could be an indicator of how the government arrived at this predicament.

A press release issued by the DfE in June said the NTP would be a "multi-year" programme.

This was quickly recalled, however, with a new release saying the NTP was to be funded with even more money – £350 million – but across just one year.

A spokesperson for the department said: "The programme aims to ensure that high quality tutoring is available in all parts of the country to those disadvantaged children and young people who will need the most support to catch up."

HIGH ATTAINERS SET FOR SUPPORT

Tuition programmes to "stretch" high attainers are under consideration as part of the government's catch-up plans. The Brilliant Club has submitted a funding proposal, under the £76 million Tuition Partners programme, for PhD students to provide tutoring in schools. A spokesperson for the university access charity said the courses were "likely to suit those children who would benefit from the stretch and challenge" of PhD tutors to "help previously mid-high attainers get back on track". The NTP

has largely been reported as providing support to the most disadvantaged pupils. But Boris Johnson has said he wants to "take further" the idea of one-to-one teaching for pupils of "exceptional ability". A spokesperson for NTP Tuition Partners said it was in the final stages of assessing applicants. The scheme would target disadvantaged pupils, "particularly those who were negatively affected by school closures". That included pupils "across the full range of the attainment spectrum".

Trainee bursaries slashed in 'short-sighted' move

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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INVESTIGATES

Schools are being forced to rethink whether their entire teacher training programmes are "viable" after the government took an axe to the level of teacher training bursaries and grants from next year.

All bursaries previously offered to teacher trainees in shortage subjects have either been reduced or scrapped, while the much-vaunted early-career payments of up to £9,000 are also gone.

The Department for Education has also ended grants for school direct salaried trainees in primary, English, geography, history, music, RE and design and technology from 2021-22.

The radical cuts mean next year's bursary spend will be £130 million – nearly half the sum spent this year – as teacher applications soar due to the coronavirus pandemic.

But the move has been branded "risky" and "short-sighted" by teacher-training experts.

Emma Hollis, chief executive of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers, said schools – some of which rely on school direct salaried grants for their entire financial model – now face tough decisions.

"They're going to have to look really closely at their financial model and make decisions about whether they can switch to a tuition fee model, but obviously that means they've not got unqualified teachers in their schools, or schools are going to have to dig deeper into their pockets and find ways to pay for it."

The grants, previously worth between £9,000 and £23,900 depending on the specialism and location of the trainee, were used by schools to help cover the costs of training their own teachers.

Last year, 1,744 primary teachers joined the profession through the school direct-salaried route, and there were 375 recruits in the secondary subjects for which the grant has been withdrawn.

The Reach Foundation, which runs Reach Academy Feltham, is training 12 teachers this year on the salaried route. But that may have to change in future years, according to chief executive Ed Vainker.

"These changes will force us to review whether our ITT offer – both bursaried and salaried placements – will be viable in 2021," he told Schools Week.



The amounts lost by school will vary. For example, a primary school outside London hiring a school direct-salaried primary trainee this year would have had to pay around £27,000 in salary and tuition fees but would receive £9,000 back. A secondary school in inner London hiring an English trainee would receive £17,600 back against a spend of around £32,000.

Hollis accepted the government had had to make "difficult decisions" but said targeting subjects where there had been an uptick in recruitment was "very short-term thinking".

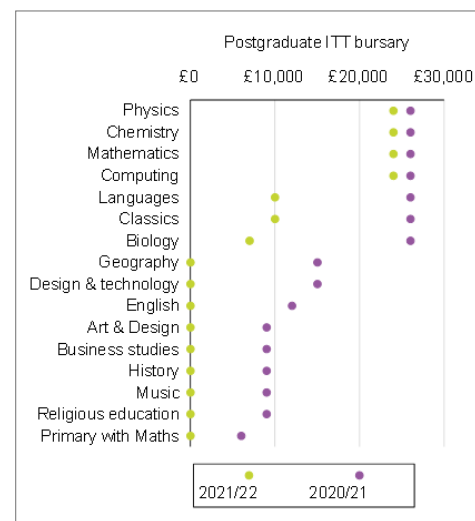
Cuts come despite retention strategy commitment

Early career payments were first introduced for maths teachers in 2018, and extended from this year to cover physics, chemistry and languages, with eligible teachers set to receive three payments of up to £3,000 in their second, third and fourth years of teaching, on top of a £26,000 initial bursary.

But the DfE confirmed this week that the payments would not be paid to trainees recruited in 2021/22, though those who joined in previous years covered by the payments will continue to receive them.

Ministers' commitment to their own recruitment and retention strategy, published last year, promised a move from bursaries to staggered retention payments to "encourage good people to remain in the profession".

Professor Sam Twiselton, who sits on the DfE's



Source: Jack Worth/NFER

recruitment and retention advisory group, said the removal of the payments seemed "short-sighted and risky".

"The focus really needs to be much more on retention than recruitment, and so incentives to keep people in the profession – I'm probably more in favour of professional incentives than the financial ones – but it can't be anything other than a problem if some of those incentives have been removed."

Almost one-third of teachers currently leave the profession within five years of entering it.

A report from the National Foundation for Educational Research last month predicted that increased recruitment during the pandemic, coupled with higher retention rates, could close gaps in shortage subjects such as maths, modern foreign languages and chemistry, which have all seen a "substantial increase" in offers.

But Jack Worth, an education economist at NFER, said the wider labour market is "likely to be in a better shape in three to five years' time, so a retention incentive for shortage-subject early-career teachers then may serve as a useful boost".

A DfE spokesperson insisted the government was not abandoning its focus on retention, adding that it was piloting "a number of schemes" including the current early-career payments for existing trainees and teachers' student loan reimbursement.

After "full evaluations to assess the impact" they will "consider our future retention offer".

Investigation

Private school debt collection partnership 'insensitive'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

A new "partnership" between an organisation representing more than 500 private schools and a debt collection agency could result in hard-up parents being "hounded" for unpaid fees during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Independent Schools Association (ISA) announced this week that Frontline Collections has become a "gold preferred supplier" to its members. It will seek to "assist independent schools across the UK in recouping unpaid school fees".

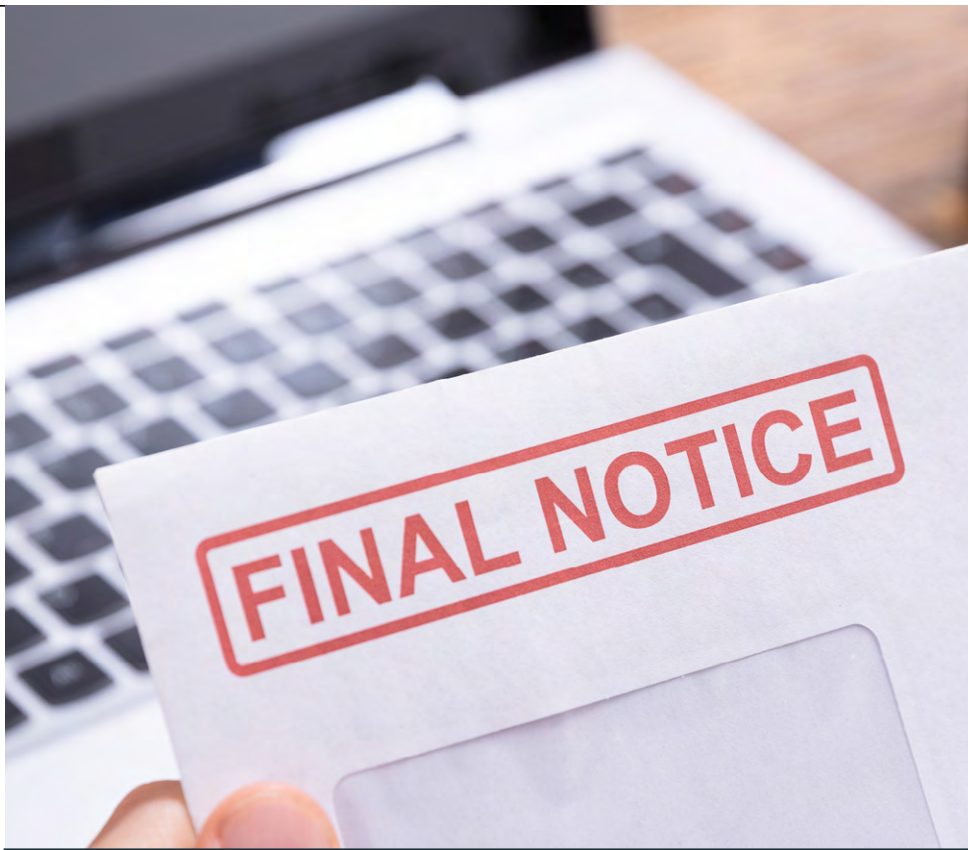
It comes as official records show parents have continued to face bankruptcy over unpaid fees, with at least four successful court petitions from private schools since March.

Unemployment has soared in the past few months, with the Office for National Statistics reporting the number of redundancies in the UK almost doubling in the three months to August. This has put pressure on private schools, a number of which have had to close.

In a statement announcing the partnership with Frontline, ISA Schools said the sustainability of private schools was a "major challenge that many are currently facing".

But Lord Storey, the Liberal Democrats' education spokesperson in the House of Lords, said the use of debt collectors to recoup money from struggling families during Covid was "just not acceptable and very insensitive".

"Imagine the national outcry there would be if state schools employed



"Parents need support, not being hounded by a debt agency"

debt collectors to collect dinner money or after school club [fees]. Parents need support, not being hounded by a debt agency."

Rudolf Elliott Lockhart, the ISA's chief executive, said private schools "have tried hard to be sensitive" to the pressures parents faced. A "significant number" had reduced fees and scrapped increases, while some had used dedicated hardship funds to help families.

However, he said that "like many businesses", there were occasions when private schools used debt collection agencies as a "last resort".

"This is not a new feature this year. If anything, Covid's impact on some parents' finances mean that this year independent schools are probably even keener than usual to hold off on engaging such agencies for as long as possible."

Chris Spencer, Frontline's operations



Lord Storey

Continued on next page

Investigation

Leading Debt Collection Agency partners with ISA

7th October 2020

Leading UK Debt Collection Agency, Frontline Collections, is delighted to announce a new partnership with the Independent Schools Association. Frontline Collections have been given a 'Gold Preferred Supplier' status by the ISA and will seek to assist independent schools across the UK in recouping unpaid School fees.

FRONTLINE
COLLECTIONS

manager, told *Schools Week* he had seen a "small recent spike" in the number of parents not paying their fees, but it was too early to say whether this was as a result of the pandemic.

"We are extremely mindful of the delicate nature and discretion need when approaching the subject of unpaid school fees. We normally will only accept instructions where the child has left the school already."

Spencer said the company usually tried to engage with parents through letters, telephone calls "and other direct communications". Its objective was to "negotiate and manage repayment of the school fees, be it in parts or full payment".

"Where the parent refuses to co-operate or respond to our efforts then we may send an agent to their property to try and engage them. Legal action to enforce payment of the debt can be taken where it is appropriate to do so."

Robert Verkaik, the co-founder of the Private School Policy Reform think tank, said the news of the partnership between ISA and Frontline "will only add to the misery of thousands of families desperately trying to make ends meet".

A search of official records by *Schools Week* show at least four people have been declared bankrupt following petitions by private schools made during the pandemic.

A *Schools Week* investigation in 2015

first revealed the practice, with at least 68 parents declared bankrupt after being chased for unpaid fees by the private education company Cognita.

However, further analysis this week by *Schools Week* of data published by *The London Gazette* found that since the start of 2015, at least 130 people have been made bankrupt following petitions from 25 different private school providers.

The true figure is likely to be higher as our analysis was not an extensive search of all providers, and individual orders are taken down from the website after a certain length of time.

Two parents were given bankruptcy orders following petitions launched in March and June by the United Church Schools Trust, part of United Learning.

The private school provider oversaw the largest number of bankruptcy petitions since 2015 in our analysis (49) followed by Cognita (36).

A spokesperson for the United Church Schools Trust said none of its petitions related to fees unpaid during the pandemic, and that the trust had created a £4 million hardship fund to help struggling parents, on top of its normal fees assistance programme.

"We have a responsibility to recover what is owed to the charity by the very few who refuse to pay. Very occasionally, legal proceedings are the only way to do this,

SCHOOLS WEEK

TEACHERS AREN'T REFLECTING, THEY'RE STRESSING

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"WE FEAR NO LEADERS WILL BE LEFT"

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BEST OF THE BLOGS: WHAT DID HE PICK?

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"It is so much easier now to be a head"

Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw

Speaking exclusively to *Schools Week* pages 16-17

Parents bankrupt after chase for fees

JOHN DICKENS

Exclusive

At least 68 parents are bankrupt after being chased for unpaid fees by a private education firm in charge of several leading independent schools, *Schools Week* can exclusively reveal.

Cognita, a private company that runs 66 independent schools across the world, including more than 30 in the UK, has taken scores of parents to court since 2015, with debt sometimes rising to more than double the original amount owed.

One mother who had arranged to pay £12,000 of fees that would normally be paid upfront, was pursued through the courts and saw her 10-year-old son's education at the school added to her debt.

Other parents who have also become bankrupt claim they are not even paid back by the debt collection firm. Two mothers said they were bankrupted by their school's fees.

Cognita was founded and headed by Sir James (Jack) Caplan in 2004, he said that he wanted to make private schooling "affordable".

When approached with our findings, Caplan said in a statement that it appeared a significant number of families in financial difficulty with Cognita and payment plans.

Bankruptcy provisions were only introduced as a "last resort after all other efforts to secure repayment have proved unsuccessful", it said.

But many parents contest this claim.

One mother, whose son was placed in private school after a move due to her husband's military service, said she was bankrupted by the school's fees. She was charged by a debt collection agency on behalf of an independent school in the month of June 2019, despite her husband paying off the debt in 2018.

She said, who suffers from severe dyslexia, had to leave the school and could not complete his A-levels.

The mother, who was working in a shop at the time, had never been in charge of payments, but

after she resigned from her husband, she was charged with a mortgage for a debt totaling £28,000. She was then given a bankruptcy order.

Sarah Harrison, a Labour councillor for social and economic inclusion at Southborough Council, was also made bankrupt. At the time, she was a single parent with a young child. She was charged with a mortgage for a debt totaling £28,000. She was then given a bankruptcy order.

"I had three children at the school and had just been told to go. I was in a bit of a panic, but the money was not paid. I was then given a bankruptcy order."

Continued on page 2

including in cases where individuals who have or appear to have substantial assets are claiming to be unable to pay."

In April, Beachborough School Trust, which runs Beachborough prep school in Northamptonshire, petitioned for the bankruptcy of one parent, who was made bankrupt five months later. The school told *Schools Week* the petition was in relation to unpaid fees from 2019.

Also in April, the Hill House School Limited, which runs Hill House School in Doncaster, submitted a petition, which was approved in September.

The organisation representing independent school bursars this week urged parents struggling to pay fees to get in touch with schools, which it said were "generally taking a sympathetic view".

David Woodgate, the chief executive of the ISBA, said private schools had "always collected bad debt", and that they sought to work with parents in the first instance, often offering payment holidays and sometimes cancelling debt.

"But where there's a situation where parents won't pay, sometimes you have to have recourse to legal means, whether through solicitors or, in extremis, some form of debt collection. But it's a very small number and it's certainly not been stimulated by Covid."

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Speed read



Exams 2021: what you need to know

The government this week announced further details about next year's exams. While the announcement left several questions unanswered (see next page), here's what we know about the 2021 exam series.

1 Most exams delayed by 3 weeks ...

The Department for Education has said that most of next year's GCSE, AS and A-level exams will happen three weeks later than usual.



The timetable for most exams will start on June 7 and end on July 2. In 2019, most ran from mid-May to mid-June.

The DfE said that the later start date for most subjects would allow extra teaching and preparation time.

It said the set-up would be similar to previous years in which a typical GCSE pupil took most of their exams within four weeks.

2 ...but first GCSE English and maths before half term

Under the new plans, pupils will sit one English and one maths GCSE paper before half term.



The longer gap between papers would give year 11 pupils the "best possible chance" of sitting a paper in each subject if they had to self-isolate, said the department.

As in normal years, schools could apply for "special consideration" for pupils unable to take exams. Provided that candidates had completed a minimum of 25 per cent of the assessments in the subject, they would be awarded a grade.

Last year pupils sat a maths paper before half term, but there was no early slot for the first English language exam.

Some A-levels with "typically very low" numbers of students will also be scheduled in the week before half term.

In most areas, half term is due to run from May 31 to June 4.

3 Two results days in one week

Results days for GCSEs and A-levels are usually a week apart, but will take place in the same week next year.



A-level results will be released on Tuesday, August 24, with GCSEs following on Friday, August 27.

However, this will cause problems for schools in Leicestershire – for

example – which are due to start the new year on Monday, August 23.

It means pupils could be still waiting for their GCSE results to see if they could progress on to A-level courses that would have already started.

Deborah Taylor, Leicestershire County Council's cabinet member for children and families, said this might "present a challenge. Nevertheless we understand why the change is proposed and will be working closely with all of our secondary schools, sixth forms and FE colleges to ensure that any disruption caused to students and their families is kept to a minimum".

4 No more changes to content

There is a moratorium on any further subject-level changes next year.

In August Ofqual outlined proposed changes that included more "optionality" in some subjects, as well as amendments to allow some assessments to take place safely.



But it said this week it would look at more options in exams, such as introducing more multiple-choice questions.

Dame Glenys Stacey, the interim chief regulator, said: "Our challenge is to find ways we can make examinations as fair as possible for students, without narrowing the curriculum."

5 Six-week consultation on next steps

The government has said it will "engage widely with the sector over the next six weeks to identify any risks to exams at a national, local, and individual student level, and consider measures needed to address any potential disruption".



Examples given include a student unable to sit exams because of illness or self-isolation, or schools affected by a local outbreak of Covid-19 during exam season.

Schools will now have to wait up to six weeks to hear more about any "plan B". While the consultation has been welcomed, the delay in alternatives has led to concerns the government is heading towards another exams disaster.

Plan B? You'll have to wait another six weeks...

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The government has been accused of taking "an eternity" to reveal full plans for exams next year, as schools face another six-week wait for further clarity.

The announcement this week that most exams will be pushed back three weeks in 2021 left leaders with many unanswered questions.

Schools are still in the dark, for instance, over what contingencies will be put in place in case large numbers of pupils miss their exams, whether comparable outcomes will be used to ensure fairness in grades, and whether schools will be held accountable for their results.

Ministers have insisted they need another period of consultation before setting out more details.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the school leadership union ASCL, said it had taken the government "an eternity to reach a very inadequate response to the scale of the challenge which lies ahead".

He said delaying the start of exams would be "of marginal benefit". He was concerned the government was "only now engaging with the sector over back-up plans in the event that students are unable to sit exams next summer".

"This process should have been started a long time before now so that it is possible to put plans in place in good time. Instead, we will now be approaching Christmas before there is any clarity on contingency arrangements."

The exams fiasco this summer, in which the government backed down on its decision to provide grades to pupils across England standardised by its computer algorithm, has led to mounting pressure on ministers to ensure fairness next year.

Sally Collier (pictured), the former chief regulator of Ofqual, said in June that schools would need to know what was happening "before the summer break ideally", but despite a consultation earlier in the



summer and the details released this week, issues remain unresolved.

These include grading and whether comparable outcomes, which are used in normal times to ensure there isn't too much grade inflation, will be retained. Unions have said the system could be used next year to peg grades at a level somewhere between 2019 and 2020.

Allowing some of the grade inflation from 2020 – where pupils were awarded the more generous centre-assessed grades – would cause a problem for universities, as more pupils would hit their offers.

Alistair Jarvis, the chief executive of Universities UK, said: "Universities will work to implement the new timetable, however we continue to seek further details from the government and Ofqual – in particular on how the process will ensure fairness in the 2021 grades."

Ministers said this week that schools would have to wait until later in the autumn to hear what was happening with grading.

The government has also not yet said whether league tables would be brought back next year. The accountability measure was cancelled this year after exams were scrapped.

The lack of any contingency plans has also alarmed sector leaders.

Bill Watkin, the chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges

Association, said schools "must start preparing now for a summer with no exams". He said it would be a "disaster" if the government decided at the end of its six-week consultation that only minor changes were needed.

"We are all hoping for the best when it comes to arrangements for next year, but we owe it to students to also prepare for the worst and ensure we have a robust plan B and C in place".

The Department for Education promised earlier this week that there would be "no further subject-level changes to exams and assessments... for GCSEs, AS and A levels". In August Ofqual announced greater optionality in some subjects and changes to make some assessments safer.

However, Dame Glenys Stacey, Ofqual's interim chief regulator, told Radio 4's Today programme on Tuesday that "greater optionality" in next year's exams was still a possibility, signalling that further tinkering to assessments was still on the table.

She said Ofqual wanted to "encourage students to study the whole of the syllabus because they could miss out on learning otherwise and that could come back to bite them later as they progress their studies".

But she said there were "ways" Ofqual could make exams as "approachable as possible", adding that "greater optionality is one of the things we can look at, but we don't want to narrow the curriculum".



Coronavirus outbreak



DfE closes loophole after Covid-19 absences missed

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

The government has closed an attendance reporting loophole six weeks into term that left officials “unable to get a grip” on the true scale of the pandemic’s disruption in schools. Thousands of absences may have been missed.

Since Monday, all schools have been asked to provide data on Covid-19-related absences, using the Department for Education’s daily education setting status form.

These include suspected and confirmed cases, and those who have had potential contact with a case inside or outside school.

In guidance sent to school leaders, seen by Schools Week, the DfE admits that it had only asked for partially or fully closed schools to provide data on Covid-19 absences.

A school was previously classified as “partially closed” if it had specifically requested a group of pupils to self-isolate. But schools with pupils absent because of Covid symptoms or symptoms in their household did not count as partially closed. Their absences were not recorded.

The action is ‘very late in the day’

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said it had been “clear for some time” that the government had not been able to “get a grip” on case counts. “This latest shift in data collection is welcome but very late in the day.”

School staff were “not impressed” with the “inaction and delay”.

The change comes after Schools Week made enquiries about the problem last month.

Neil Patterson, the principal at Silverstone UTC in Northamptonshire, said he had sent 14 pupils home to self-isolate since the start of term after one pupil tested positive. This left the college “partially closed” under DfE definitions.

But the absences of 11 more pupils because of Covid-related reasons were not able to be logged, which meant the government would “know nothing about them”.

Patterson said he assumed decision-makers would “want to know how many students had been affected and for how long”, but this had been impossible to report.



Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said it was important the government got a full picture as infection rates soared and pupils in almost all areas were having to stay at home.

The change in reporting comes as more regions head into stricter lockdown measures under the government’s new tier system.

Meanwhile, latest DfE data shows that nearly one in ten schools is now closed, although attendance has crept up to 92.2 per cent as of October 8.

Government officials now tracking online learning

The increased attendance collection shows the fine line the DfE is attempting to tread.

Caroline Barlow, head of Heathfield Community College in East Sussex, questioned the additional workload for a task that used to take a staff member less than half an hour. It now takes four staff members “significantly longer”, she said.

Extra questions on remote learning are also required, including the amount of work set and how often it is marked.

Schools must choose from one hour to more than four hours of work set, while feedback is categorised as daily, two to four times a week, weekly or fortnightly.

It follows a new rule that schools must provide remote learning for children absent because of Covid-19. It comes into force next Thursday (October 22).

McCulloch said this was “unnecessarily time-consuming” and should be streamlined. “This feels less like a government building a

picture of attendance, and more like Big Brother checking up.”

A spokesperson for the department said it initially only asked for Covid absence data from partially closed schools to understand their position at the start of term and that it endeavoured to balance the information needs of the department with the burden placed on schools.

As well as attendance entries, the department also “closely monitors daily data reported by schools through our regional schools commissioners, local authorities and other teams within the department, including confirmed positive cases”. Public Health England also reports infection data.

The department said it constantly reviewed what information it published.

Data shows daily rise in Covid-19 absences

The DfE has been reticent to provide the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases among school pupils, saying it won’t provide a “running commentary”.

However, aggravated anonymous data from management information system provider Arbor shows the number of Covid-related absences in schools has risen every day this week.

On Monday, 3.5 per cent of pupils were self-isolating, rising to 3.9 per cent by Wednesday.

The data is from the 1,200 schools and 100 academy trusts that use the Arbor management information system and accounts for about 360,000 pupils.

The statistics only indicate the scale of the pandemic’s effects on schools and are not representative of the national picture.

Coronavirus outbreak

Budgets on a knife edge due to soaring supply staff costs

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

Schools are "on a knife edge" as the mounting costs of supply staff parachuted in to replace isolating teachers could leave them out of cash "by Christmas".

A survey from the NAHT school leaders' union, based on more than 2,000 responses, has found schools are spending on average £2,454 more on supply staff than they would have expected halfway through the first term.

Temporary teaching staff and additional teaching assistant time were the two biggest reasons for schools incurring extra Covid costs – with 62 per cent and 53 per cent of schools respectively saying they had paid out for these reasons.

In addition, 65 per cent of respondents reported the number of lessons that they have needed to cover due to staff absence had increased.

Daniel Wright, headteacher at St Anne's RC High School in Stockport, said his school had already burned through £17,000 of its £52,000 supply budget due to Covid.

He explained problems were not simply related to Covid cases within the school, but also teachers needing to self-isolate to provide childcare to their own children when their bubble burst at school, as well as for the usual sickness cover.

"The supply budget we have this year has been massively hit – it will be gone by Christmas if we continue at this rate," he said.

Wright explained that a supply teacher cost around £160 a day and of the 51 teaching staff on site up to eight had been absent at one time – including the entire RE department of the Catholic school.

This would mean around 46 lessons needing to be covered before taking into consideration lunch and break duties "to keep the site safe".

Meanwhile, another respondent to the NAHT survey labelled the supply costs as "crippling" while another warned "we're on a knife edge, I have no more than 15 days left in my supply budget".

The Department for Education previously



released data on the number of teachers absent during the limited opening of schools last academic year. However, it has not done so since the full return of schools.

The DfE said it is still collecting data on teacher absence and is continually reviewing what it publishes.

But figures from Teacher Tapp show the weekly absence has been consistent at between three and four per cent of teachers off. As previously reported, four per cent would equate to 25,000 teachers nationally.

Wright said that to negate the staff problems, his school is employing a rota system – with years 9 and 10 learning remotely from home for three days to free up school staff to cover the lessons needed.

Wright claimed this was because the "quality from supply teachers is typically poor. It's not education, it's keeping children occupied and supervised, but they are certainly not being taught".

"We are going to have to do a rota in and rota out system until such a time when staffing levels improve at the school," Wright added.

School business manager Lisa Lancaster said it had been "extremely difficult to get cover staff in" – for instance, from other schools in her academy trust (which

we haven't named), who were all themselves stretched.

She added that schools' problems are compounded further as insurance companies say they will not cover losses of self-isolating teachers.

But the increased supply demand is proving to be a boon for agencies. Supply provider Zen Educate, a social enterprise, has reported a 331 per cent increase in bookings of supply teachers in September, compared with same period in 2019.

The majority of the growth has been in schools booking supply for two weeks, providing cover for teachers who are self-isolating with either a confirmed or suspected case of coronavirus.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT said the situation is "absolutely unsustainable".

"This wasn't budgeted for and the government is so far refusing any reimbursement. Given how tight budgets were pre-Covid, this spells financial disaster for many."

He added that behind the financial costs were "the uncalculated hours teachers are spending covering multiple lessons for shielding staff, or school leaders having to teach and cover lunch and breaktime as well as doing their own full-time jobs".

Coronavirus outbreak



Schools to implement face covering rules amid new lockdown 'tiers'

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Schools will remain open as the country moves into lockdown "tiers" in an attempt to stop rising numbers of Covid-19 cases.

However, the government confirmed last night that it now expects secondary schools in areas that are deemed "high" or "very high" risk to ensure staff and pupils wear face coverings in communal areas (see tier 1 for schools).

The government's new triple tier local alert level system imposes different rules in different regions, depending on whether they are deemed to have a "medium," "high" or "very high" risk.

However, the government has confirmed that the current rules for schools – which include 4 different tiered actions – will remain in place in all areas.

A spokesperson for the DfE said on Tuesday that the tiers in education were "not in scope" of the new local alert level.

However, on Thursday, a spokesperson for the department said that schools in areas that are now deemed "high" or "very high" will fall into the tier 1 schools category.

Non-statutory guidance on this states such schools have the "additional requirement that face coverings should be worn by staff and pupils in schools and colleges, from year 7 and above, outside classrooms when moving around communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained".

It comes as national newspapers report Boris Johnson is working on plans to adopt a version of a "circuit-breaker" lockdown timed to coincide with English schools' half term.

Labour is calling for a two to three-week "circuit-breaker" to get the R rate down (the number of

people that one infected person will pass a virus on to). Sir Keir Starmer, the party's leader, said this would not mean schools closing, but "if it happens imminently it can be timed to run across half term to minimise disruption".

But the prime minister told the Commons this week that while he will "rule out nothing, of course, in combating the virus... we are going to do it with the local, the regional approach that can drive down, and will drive down, the virus if it is properly implemented".

A report by the SAGE group of scientists, issued on September 21 but published on Monday, said the rate of increase in infections was "expected to accelerate in the near future as the impact of school, college and university openings, and policy changes with respect to return to workplaces, and entertainment and leisure venues, filter through".

The document also said that outbreaks in schools had caused "widespread disruption", and recommended that a "circuit-breaker" national lockdown would be most effective if it coincided with half term.

However, the report also said it was "still not clear to what extent (if any) schools magnify transmission in communities rather than reflect the prevalence within the community".

The Times reported on Wednesday that the prime minister was working on plans to adopt a version of a circuit-breaker around half-term. One reported compromise was that urban areas with

higher infection rates, not necessarily only those in tier 3, would be subject to a limited period of additional measures.

It was also announced this week that schools in "particularly" high-risk areas may be eligible for ten extra test kits.

The 3 local alert level tiers

TIER 1 - MEDIUM

The rule of six applies indoors and outdoors and 10pm curfew on pubs and restaurants

TIER 2 - HIGH

No household mixing indoors, rule of six applies in private gardens and parks and 10pm curfew.

TIER 3 - VERY HIGH

No household mixing indoors or in private gardens, rule of six applies to public outdoor spaces, pubs and bars not serving meals must close and guidance on travelling in and out of the area.



The 4 school lockdown tiers

TIER 1

Schools will remain open to all pupils but with a requirement that face coverings should be worn in corridors and other communal areas of secondary schools where social distancing cannot take place (same for all tiers).

TIER 2

Primary, AP and special schools will remain open to all pupils, but secondary schools will move to a rota model, combining "on-site provision with remote education". But secondaries will continue to allow full-time attendance for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers.

TIER 3

Primary, AP and special schools will remain open to all pupils, but secondary schools would only allow full-time on-site provision only to vulnerable pupils, the children of key workers and selected years groups identified by the DfE. Remote education for all other pupils.

TIER 4

All mainstream schools only open to vulnerable children and children of key workers, with other all other pupils learning remotely. But AP and special schools will continue to allow full-time attendance of all pupils.



Boris Johnson

News

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Leading AP trust closes as finances 'unsustainable'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

A leading academy trust for excluded and vulnerable learners is to close and give up its seven schools after its financial position became "unsustainable".

The TBAP trust has confirmed it will relinquish its alternative provision schools in London and Cambridgeshire, and that the move had been approved by the academies minister, Baroness Berridge.

It follows a tumultuous few years for the trust, which already recently relinquished two of its schools in Essex and Warrington.

"As is well known, the trust has undergone a challenging time financially in recent years and despite its best efforts, the trust's financial position has become unsustainable," a trust spokesperson said.

"It has therefore reached the difficult decision to enter a process to transfer its remaining seven academies in London and Cambridgeshire to other trusts. TBAP remains committed to delivering strong outcomes for its learners and we believe the transfers are in the best long-term interests of learners and staff."

The trust was issued with a financial notice to improve in August 2018 after failing to set a balanced budget for the year. The notice came followed a request from the trust for advance funds of £300,000 from the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The ESFA subsequently had to



Seamus Oates

provide a further £650,000.

Schools Week later revealed the DfE had approved TBAP to take over two schools and open two new ones despite it being £1 million in deficit, and that the trust had also needed a bailout to help pay its pension contributions.

The trust's accounts for 2017-18, published in February last year, revealed how the trust had unknowingly racked up a £2.4 million deficit because of a "systematic" failure in its financial systems.

Last year, the trust was also criticised by Ofsted after inspectors arrived at one of its schools to find more than a third of staff were missing. The report into TBAP Aspire AP Academy in Harlow, Essex, found the trust had an "inaccurate" view of the effectiveness of the school.

In October, the trust confirmed it would give

up Aspire and its New Horizons AP academy in Warrington.

The trust's latest accounts, published this January, revealed its borrowing had increased to £1.9 million. At the time, the trust disclosed fears about its "ongoing financial sustainability", and blamed late payments from cash-strapped local authorities for its woes.

Government trouble-shooter Angela Barry even joined the troubled trust to help sort out its finances, but the organisation confirmed today its efforts to recover had failed.

The spokesperson said the education and welfare of learners, as well as the needs of staff, would remain its "top priority" during the transfer of its schools, and that it would work with regional schools commissioners "to ensure each academy joins a trust committed to improving outcomes for learners, while offering excellent professional development opportunities for staff who transfer".

The trust will receive financial support from the ESFA until all the transfers are complete, and then be dissolved.

The trust today pointed to its "proven track record of expertise and success", adding that learners at TBAP academies "have outperformed the Alternative Provision (AP) national average for GCSE results year after year".

The spokesperson said Berridge's letter confirming the rebrokerage of the remaining schools "noted in particular the educational strength of TBAP's executive team", and the "inspiring vision" chief executive Seamus Oates had brought to the trust.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Shadow schools minister resigns

Margaret Greenwood has resigned as shadow schools minister to vote against the so-called "spycops" bill.

The Wirral West MP and former teacher has only been in the role since April.

Labour whipped its MPs to abstain on the government's human intelligence sources (criminal conduct) bill, which would authorise spies to commit criminal offences.

But according to LabourList, Greenwood was one of 35 Labour MPs who voted against the bill. Also among them was

former shadow education secretary Rebecca Long-Bailey and former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

In her letter of resignation, Greenwood thanked Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer for the opportunity to serve on the front bench, but said she intended to vote against the bill "on a matter of principle".

"I cannot stand by and allow a bill to go through that will profoundly impact on our civil liberties and the environment in which individuals can

get together to have their voices heard. I believe protecting our rights in this regard as a matter of fundamental importance."

She described the shadow schools minister role as one "I care about every deeply", and said she would

continue to campaign from the back benches "to support Labour to demand an education service that puts pupil wellbeing at the heart of policy making".



Margaret Greenwood

News

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£500k to boost flexible working

JAMES CARR

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The government is looking for eight schools to share almost £500,000 as part of a programme to boost flexible working and improve staff retention.

Each flexible working ambassador school (FWAS) will receive £60,000.

The scheme, which runs from April next year until December 2022, is part of the Department for Education's recruitment and retention strategy, which says it is "more important than ever that teaching is compatible with having children and a family life".

An ambassador school will be expected to improve the practice and culture around flexible working "by providing peer support for headteachers within local and other networks".

Each will recruit at least five schools across its region and will help them to tackle the "practical challenges" involved in developing



flexible working policies such as staffing and timetables.

The schools also will run "at least five online peer-to-peer events" and provide "support networks, advice and guidance directly to teachers who want to access flexible working opportunities". The DfE said this would, in turn, increase the chance flexible working requests would be approved.

Applicants must have a 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted rating for overall effectiveness, while this year's phonics results for primary school applicants must be above 90 per cent, and Progress 8 scores "equal or above the national average".

Secondary schools must have average or above average measures at Progress 8, Attainment 8 and Ebacc.

The tender for the contract adds: "FWAS will support schools to offer more flexible working opportunities, which in turn can improve retention rates."

The DfE's most recent school workforce census shows the overall rate of teachers leaving the sector fell from 9.6 in 2018 to 9.2 per cent last year. However, the five-year retention rate fell from 68 per cent to 67.4 per cent.

Schools Week previously reported that 28 per cent of women teachers work part-time, compared with the 40 per cent average for all UK female employees.

Male teachers also lag behind the national average with 8 per cent working part-time compared with 12 per cent of men nationally.

A Teacher Tapp survey of about 2,500 teachers last year found more than one in ten would "definitely" consider working three days a week or less.

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MATs miss apprenticeship targets requirement, but DfE softens stance

FRASER WHIELDON

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EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education looks to have relaxed the requirement for public bodies to publish their progress towards the 2.3 per cent apprenticeship target, claiming it is merely "good practice".

It comes after an investigation by sister title *FE Week* found multi-academy trusts had failed to meet a new government requirement to publicise what percentage of their staff had started an apprenticeship in 2019-20 on their websites.

Since the apprenticeship levy was introduced in 2017, public sector bodies with 250 or more staff in England have had a target to employ an average of at least 2.3 per cent of their staff as new apprentice starts over the period of April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2021.

Under statutory guidance, the bodies must report their annual progress to government and make the information "easily accessible to the public", for example, on their website. The data for how many apprentices start at each body is due on September 30 each year.

Chair of the education select committee Robert Halfon, who implemented the target when he was skills minister, called on public bodies to be "wholly transparent" and to comply with the regulations.

Where they do not, the Department for Education should hold them "fully accountable", he demanded.

However, representative bodies have called on the government to ease off enforcing the rule owing to the pressures the public sector is facing from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite its own rules, the Department for Education said that while public bodies "must" report the data to central government



Robert Halfon

so that overall performance against the target can be published, it was simply "good practice" for the bodies to publish their own data on their website.

Recognising the challenges organisations are facing this year, the department also said that where data is submitted after September 30, "we will endeavour to take account of it when we publish annual performance data in November".

Out of the 20 largest academy trusts in England, *FE Week* could only find the data for one trust in the first week of October.

United Learning, the largest multi-academy trust, was one of those not complying with the DfE's rules. A spokesperson said the trust, run by former Department for Education director general Sir Jon Coles, makes the information available "on request" and reports the data annually to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders union, Geoff

Barton, said he imagines MATs have not hit the deadline as "they are having to spin so many plates at the moment to manage Covid safety measures, keep their schools open, and reintegrate children back into the classroom".

He would expect the government to be conscious of these "huge pressures", and called on the DfE, which enforces the data publication rules, "not to insist upon fairly arcane accountability measures being met to the letter".

The one trust that did publish its data, Delta Academies Trust, had a workforce of 3,208 as of March 31, 2020 and 0.56 per cent of those were apprentices. A spokesperson said that while they were able to publish the data on time, this "clearly continues to be an exceptionally busy period for everyone working in schools" so it was "inevitable" that some work would be delayed.

The *FE Week* investigation also found councils and hospital trusts were not following the rules.

Queen's birthday honours



Footballer Rashford among birthday honours recipients

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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The footballer and child poverty campaigner Marcus Rashford has urged the government to provide free school meal vouchers over the October and Christmas holidays after receiving the MBE in the Queen's birthday honours.

The Manchester United and England forward, whose intervention earlier this year was instrumental in persuading the government to U-turn and provide vouchers over the summer break, was honoured for "services to vulnerable children in the UK during Covid-19".

Another 58 people from England's schools community were recognised for their work in education, including 11 given special gongs for their work during the pandemic.

Rashford said he was "incredibly honoured and humbled", but warned the fight to protect the most vulnerable children was "far from over".

He has since started a campaign to get the government to extend the scheme over the next two school holiday periods.

However, his pleas appeared to fall on deaf ears this week, with Boris Johnson's spokesperson telling journalists the country was now in a "different position" to the one it faced in



Marcus Rashford

the summer.

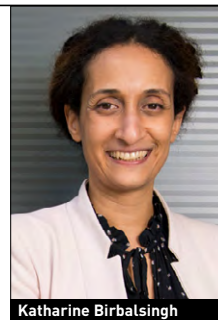
"Schools are back open to all pupils and do not regularly provide food to pupils during term-time. We believe the best way to support families outside of term times is through universal credit, rather than schools subsidising meals."

Rashford has also backed a draft law that would require the DfE to provide funding for free breakfasts for schools that have high numbers of disadvantaged pupils. The school breakfast bill, drawn up by Labour MP Emma Lewell-Buck and supported by MPs from across the political divide, had its first reading in parliament on Tuesday.

Among those recognised in the honours list for their work in education during Covid-19 are Oak National Academy principal Matt Hood and curriculum lead David Thomas, who will both receive the OBE.



Zane Powles



Katharine Birbalsingh

Zane Powles, the assistant head who made headlines when he walked for miles to deliver meals to pupils' homes during partial school closures, will receive the MBE, while primary teacher Sarah Wilson, who ran 18 miles to see pupils because she missed them, will receive the British Empire Medal.

Powles said he was "shocked" but "extremely proud" to receive the honour. "I'm just a normal sort of person who did the right thing," he said.

The remainder of the 58 schools sector honours are for contributions to education more broadly, and include some well-known names.

Katharine Birbalsingh, headteacher at Michaela Community School, which is often referred-to as the strictest school in the country, will receive the CBE, as will Yvonne Conolly, who was the country's first black woman teacher.

CBE

Katharine BIRBALSINGH, founder and headmistress, Michaela Community School
Cecile Yvonne CONOLLY, former headteacher
Mary Elizabeth CURNOCK COOK OBE, educationalist
Jonathan David DOUGLAS, chief executive, National Literacy Trust
Richard GILL, chief executive officer, Arthur Terry Learning Partnership
Nicolette KING OBE, lately chair, Greenacre Academy Trust
Dr Deborah Catherine MORGAN, director, primary mathematics, National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics

OBE

Steven BAKER, executive headteacher, Aspire Schools Federation
Sandy BROWN, national leader of education
Herminder Kaur CHANNA JP, principal, Ark Boulton Academy
Adrienne Pamela CHERRYWOOD, founder and headteacher, Cressey College, Croydon
Lyn DANCE, headteacher, The Milestone School and chief executive officer, SAND Academies Trust
Shaun Alan FENTON, headteacher, Reigate Grammar School, Surrey
Marie GENTLES, lately headteacher, Hawkswood Primary Pupil Referral Unit, London
Max William Von Furer HAIMENDORF, principal, Ark King Solomon Academy, Westminster
Matthew David HOOD, principal, Oak National Academy, London
Caroline HODDINOTT, lately executive headteacher, Haybridge School and Sixth Form, Hagley
Muhammad Naveed IDREES, headteacher, Feversham Primary Academy, Bradford
Anita JOHNSON, headteacher, Loxford School of

Science and Technology and chief executive officer, Loxford School Trust
Rabbi David MEYER, executive director, Partnership for Jewish Schools
Martin John Edward MOORMAN, headteacher, Ravenscliffe High School and Sports College
Alison PAUL, headteacher, Brimble Hill Special School, Swindon
Tobias Grant PEYTON-JONES, education and skills ambassador, Siemens UK
Dr Philip Bryan Robert SMITH, executive principal, Outwood Academy Portland
David Mark THOMAS, principal, Jane Austen College and curriculum lead, Oak National Academy
Janet Claire THOMPSON, headteacher, Dorothy Goodman School, Hinckley, for services to education
Sian Elizabeth THORNHILL, director of education, Harrow International Schools and lately executive principal, Skinners' Kent Academy Trust

MBE

Richard Eric BELLING, chair, Belling Charitable Settlement
Valerie BURRELL-WALKER, fair access manager, Croydon Council
Alison CRESSWELL, lately head of participation and education services, Stockport Borough Council
Jane DAVENPORT, headteacher, Reynolds Cross School
Jacqueline Monica HARLAND, speech and language therapist, ARC Pathway
Linda HARVEY, headteacher, Beaumont Primary School
Rita HINDOCHA-MORJARIA, executive principal and director of secondary education, Mead Educational Trust
Sarah Lucy JACKSON, headteacher and founder, Parayhouse School, Hammersmith
Graeme Allan LAWRIE, partnerships director, ACS International Schools
Janice LEVER, creator and director, Jigsaw PSHE

Professor David Michael LEWIS, chair, Riverston School, Royal Borough of Greenwich
Lee Philip MILLER, deputy chief executive officer, Thinking Schools Academy Trust
Sarah-Jane MINTEY, founder and chief executive officer, Developing Experts
Jayne Beverley MOORE, lately deputy headteacher, Ridgeway School, Farnham
Doris Bell NEVILLE-DAVIES, trustee, Parentkind
Deborah Jane PARGETER, headteacher, Tithe Farm Primary
Carrie Anne PHILBIN, director of educator support, Raspberry Pi Foundation
Helen Jean POLLARD, consultant, Institute of Physics
Zane POWLES, assistant head, Western Primary School
Jonathan SEATON DL, founder and chief executive officer, Twinkl
Jillian Margaret SHAW, head teacher, New York Primary School, Tyne and Wear
Margaret Ann SOUTHALL, lately headteacher, Corbett Primary School, Bobbington, Staffordshire
Rabbi Avrohom SUGARMAN, director, Haskel School, Gateshead
Syed Afsar UDDIN, teacher of Bengali, Oaklands Secondary School
Truda WHITE, founder, Music in Secondary Schools Trust

British Empire Medal

Simon CHARLETON, chief executive officer, St John's College
Anne Pauline EWIN, mentor, Mulberry School for Girls
Joy Nancy GUY
Sarah WILSON, nursery teacher, Fishergate Primary School

Companion of the Order of the Bath

Mike GREEN, chief operating officer, Department for Education

Those recognised for their work during the Covid-19 pandemic are in *italics*.

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
CONTACT US NEWS@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UKTo the shining lights in the Covid gloom:
thank you

Despite all the doom and gloom over the past seven months, there was cause for celebration last week as the recipients of the Queen's Birthday Honours were revealed.

Our editorials across previous weeks have mostly chronicled the shenanigans surrounding the latest government coronavirus failure, and the dire consequences for schools.

But Friday's honours list reminds us that shining lights who are going out of their way to change lives can always brighten up the darkest days.

Overall, 58 people were recognised for their work in the English schools system, with 11 of them singled out for praise for their work during coronavirus.

As well as those behind the Oak National Academy and other well-known names from the edu world, the list also plucked out some of our inspirational school leaders and teachers.

These included Zane Powles, who inspired so many people when he was pictured loading up

his rucksack to deliver free school meals on foot to his pupils, and Sarah Wilson, who ran for miles to see students she missed in a socially-distanced fashion.

It was also heartening to see trailblazer Yvonne Conolly, who was the country's first black woman teacher, honoured.

It would be remiss of us not to mention footballer Marcus Rashford, whose high-profile intervention in the debate over free school meals helped prompt the government's U-turn to provide vouchers over the summer.

Showing how much he cares about driving change, he's now pushing even further and wants the extension of the voucher scheme over the October and Christmas holidays, too.

We hope ministers see sense on this, as they did in the summer. To quote Rashford himself: "Whatever your feeling, opinion, or judgement, food poverty is never the child's fault".

To all those shining lights, we say 'thank you'.

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Do specialist maths schools have proof of concept yet?

James Handscombe, @JamesHandscombe

Kings and Exeter are both great places, and definitely proof of the concept that higher funding for further education can deliver great results, but I'm not convinced that maths needs the special status, nor that it's actually good for budding mathematicians to keep them from something more rounded.

Government to 'explore' one-to-one teaching for 'exceptional' pupils

Milly Gandy

"Exceptional" based on what? IQ, academic grades, a narrow focus on "viable" careers of the future? What's the implication and mental health impact of not making the grade? It's bad enough where I live where schools take at least year 7 to rebuild the kids' esteem after the 11-plus [grammar school test] "failure".

I wonder if this also includes SEN children? Knowing first-hand how hard it is to secure resource and how so many struggle to access learning remotely and have missed out on all of the wraparound support - or are those children not "exceptional"?

Exasperation has driven me to retire early

Ian Stock

Another one bites the dust. In my case it was mental health. I too now teach two days a week and enjoy it, but the past few years have been hard: not everyone has a headteacher's earnings to fall back on. I have never been convinced by "career educationalists": who are they *really* doing it all for? I just wanted to teach young people - though even that didn't shield me from the consequences of the crazy, mad demands of this profession.

Phil Sharrock

You are me Robert. I am you. Your story resonated with me strongly. I too have now found peace and health. I really miss it all, but don't.

Alison Clarke, @alisonclarke14

Me too. 33rd year of teaching and 21st year as head. Had intended to work for a few more years but the last few have changed my perspective. 70-hour weeks were not sustainable. Being able to

REPLY OF THE WEEK

Chris Challis

Ofsted's visits find schools' remote learning 'not aligned' to curriculum

Amanda Spielman's comment is completely nonsensical. Remote learning will be aligned to the curriculum, but it will be adapted for an online platform.

Amanda: imagine doing Ofsted visits remotely, they would be different and the atmosphere would

be different. That is exactly what we have had to do to develop online lessons, even when they have been live. I suggest you do a remote inspection and see how quickly you will have to adapt and learn yourself. Many of us did a bloody fantastic job!



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

sleep through the night and enjoy my garden have become priority. Finishing in nine weeks!

Les Walton, @LesWalton500

I am so sorry to lose a good leader. I respect your choice and I wish you all the best. We need to unite and ensure the balance of support for heads outweighs regulation. Our school leaders need to be respected and cared for.

New report calls for dedicated 'Office for Edtech' to drive change

Tony Parkin

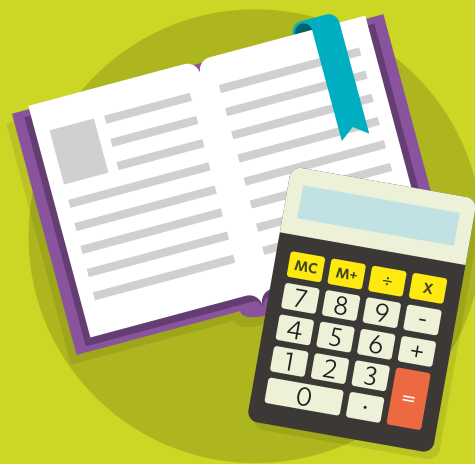
Quote: The dedicated office would "bring many disparate strands of work together under key ministerial leadership." ...as long as the key minister isn't Nick Gibb?

Ministers 'miss chance' to end power of academy 'oligarchs'

John Fowler

Perchance, the model is wrong and not the individuals filling the roles required by the model. Any model which does not factor in local democratic accountability will always throw up intra-school governance issues.

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Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



'I'm in listening mode'



Three months into the job of shadow education secretary, Kate Green explains why she is a 'policy geek' who sees 'inclusion' as crucial

In many ways, the boots Kate Green must fill as shadow education secretary are big ones. Both her immediate predecessors have powerful personal stories about social mobility that appealed to many. Angela Rayner, now deputy leader of the Labour Party, left school early, had a mum who couldn't read or write, but earned a seat in parliament against the odds. Her successor, Rebecca Long-Bailey, worked in a pawn shop and furniture factory before she became a solicitor. Both are northern women who were relatively young when they took the shadow education brief – Rayner was just 36 years old – and with their large personal followings, were touted for bigger jobs.

You could see Edinburgh-born Green as their

opposite. With parents who attended university, she doesn't at first hand appear to have that compelling back story of triumphing against the odds that politicians seem to crave (alternatively, that voters crave in politicians). And, as a former chief executive of Child Poverty Action, she already has a chunk of her career behind her – which doesn't support the rising star narrative.

But this may have big hidden advantages for the law graduate. A self-professed "policy geek" (much like shadow chancellor Anneliese Dodds, another native Scot), Green holds an opportunity to win over schools and colleges with a grasp of detail that neither of her predecessors were best known for (though to be fair to Long-Bailey, she didn't have long to prove otherwise).

Green has worked with children and families for years – she's a former director of the National Council for One Parent Families – so the role is unlikely to just be another stepping stone of her political career. Were Labour to win the election, Green's character may set her up well to bed down and tackle the nitty gritty policy issues others have ignored.

But that's potentially a long way off, and some problems are more immediate. At the end of last month, Green herself was in hot water when she said the Covid-19 pandemic was a "good crisis" which Labour shouldn't let "go to waste", leading to Boris Johnson claiming her words revealed "the real approach of the Labour Party". Green is total in her self-condemnation.

Profile: Kate Green



Meeting students at Stretford High School in 2019

"You know, if you want to be a politician operating at this level, it's incumbent on you to do it really, really well. And on that day I slipped up, I made a mistake, and there is no room for mistakes at this level, there just isn't. Of course, everyone is human, but you have to do this job really, really well."

But she seems to keep that human side slightly more hidden. Green skirts over her home life beyond childhood, and can't lay hands on childhood photographs. In that regard, she probably reflects her Scottish upbringing, one in which hard work and privacy were the norm ("I had no idea how my parents voted," says Green). Her parents were from poorer backgrounds in west Scotland and had managed to become teachers, so education was seen as crucial. But a streak of rebellion grew in Green during that time, too.

One incident she remembers was her father in conversation with a friend who was leaving his primary school headship for a teacher training college post. "The friend asked, 'will your deputy [whom Green describes as an "amazing, formidable woman"] get your job when you leave?' And my dad said, 'Oh, they'd never give a school this big to a woman.' I was sitting there thinking, 'You have spent my entire life telling

me I can be anything I want, and I've just heard you say to somebody else that actually I can't." Green never told her father the impression the

"Banking wasn't it, I didn't enjoy it, and I wasn't any good at it"

moment made on her, but says it and the lack of opportunity for women has stuck with her for decades. "I guess I've spent a lot of my career kicking back against that."

First off, she left Scotland and arrived during the 1981 recession in London, where she would do 15 years at Barclays. Her assessment is concise. "Banking wasn't it, I didn't enjoy it, and I wasn't any good at it." Why do it? Her parents recalled their own parents being jobless, including her grandfather who would pick up work on the docks. Job security "was burned into my psyche". Green now worries that in the



Visiting Central London Nursery in Summer 2020

upcoming recession, like her, young people could spend years just trying to find work they enjoy.

But a future direction began to form as the young Green reacted to homelessness in the capital under the Thatcher government by attending Labour Party meetings, which she "found a bit depressing". But she persevered and eventually another party member, a teacher, suggested she stand for parliament. "I said, 'Don't be ridiculous, people like me don't do something like that.' But the idea stuck." She stood for parliament in Tony Blair's landslide 1997 election for the Cities of London and Westminster, a Conservative stronghold, and lost. That experience, however, "changed everything"

Profile: Kate Green



Visiting Coventry School in July 2020



Kate visiting new play area at Our Lady of the Rosary School, 2018

and she left banking. “I went to work in the Home Office for a couple of years. I learnt more in those two years in the Home Office about how the country is really run than I had ever understood before.” Her main policy interest at this point was criminal justice, since her degree was in law and she’d been a magistrate.

Green then left the civil service to stand and lose an election again, this time for the Greater London Assembly in 2000. “By this time I’m 40 and I’m thinking, ‘Look, what are you going to do with your life now, you can’t spend the next ten years going around losing elections, get a grip!’” What did her parents think of this career move? “They hadn’t particularly wanted me to stand for election, they were nervous.” But when Green was elected in 2010 from an all-women shortlist to Stretford and Urmston in Greater Manchester, they were excited. The level of privacy at home is evident when she adds with a wide smile, “My mum came out to me as a Labour Party voter!”

The delay to becoming an MP may have been fortuitous. By 2010, Green had racked up significant experience in two top social policy roles. Labour leader Keir Starmer has pointed to her role as former chief executive of Child Poverty Action (during the years when New Labour pulled almost one million children out of poverty) but less has been made of the job Green says was her “happiest”. As director of the National Council for One Parent Families, she got

to support some of the most undervalued women in society. Clearly Green is highly irritated by people stereotyping vulnerable groups without checking their facts first. “Teenage single mums had been demonised... but this is the parent that

“Teenage single mums had been demonised... but this is the parent that stayed”

stayed, not the parent that walked away. They are desperate to be role models for their kids.” The same motivation was behind her support for Roma, gypsy and traveller children (she chaired the all-party parliamentary group). She recalls being elected when Eric Pickles was secretary of state for communities. “He was announcing a cut in funding for traveller sites, and at the same time wanted to tighten up planning laws. And I thought that’s stupid policy, and I don’t like stupid policy, so I got annoyed.” She started “asking questions” and has been trying to tackle

prejudice against the community since.

The most telling line here is “I don’t like stupid policy.” It’s also why, when I press Green for details of her policy plans on various issues – scrapping Ofsted, the ‘outstanding’ judgment, SATs, workload, recruitment – she takes on a cautious and pragmatic tone, saying that most will be “reviewed”. Labour clearly needs someone who can present policy-tight answers to big visions lacking clear plans like its proposed “National Education Service”. But as a geek officially annoyed by stupid policy, she won’t be drawn before she’s done the research. “I’m in listening mode.”

But she does say one of her big focuses is “inclusion”. Unequal outcomes for pupils with special educational needs, black and ethnic minorities, traveller children “are just unforgivable. We should not leave any child behind.” She also reacts strongly to my suggestion that certain proposals – like scrapping Ofsted – could be criticised by parents as leading to lower standards. “I’m absolutely not interested in lowering standards. We want to have no compromise on standards.”

In a sense, Green is a shadow education secretary who is most naturally at home with being an advocate for the vulnerable. Her challenge will now be to combine that with detailed policy plans that have been somewhat lacking among the Labour party in recent years.

Opinion

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JEN PERSSON

Director, defenddigitalme

Unlawful, unsafe and unaccountable. Education, we have a data problem

A damning ICO report on the DfE's data handling is a wake-up call for the department that schools can also learn from, writes Jen Persson

It's school census time again. But do you know where the pupil records go every term?

Over 21 million people's names are now in the national pupil database, collected in state education since 1996, including detailed special educational needs, and indicators of adoption. Even university students' religion and sexual orientation are added from equality monitoring.

It was therefore welcome that the Information Commissioner's Office audited the DfE in early 2020 after the misuse of learners' records by gambling companies.

The executive summary does not detail the 139 recommendations for improvement, but over 60 per cent are classified as urgent or high-priority and it is clear that the ICO expects action from the DfE to make processing of pupil data lawful.

In the meantime, many of the recommendations are also relevant for education settings, and there is no need to wait for the DfE to set the example. Here are 7 of them:

1. The ICO found the DfE doesn't

have a good grasp of everything it holds, a direct breach of Article 30 of the GDPR which requires all organisations, schools included, to document all data processing.

2. The DfE does not provide sufficient information about how

“ We know the issues and thanks to the ICO we know they start at the very top

people's data is used, often not telling them at all. This is a failure of the first principle of the GDPR outlined in Article 5(1)(a), to process lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. In our work, we also find that schools routinely fail to tell families which apps are used, about primary assessment and accountability data collections, what is optional in the census, explain their data rights or how to meet them in practical terms such as the Right to Object, or offer alternatives to biometric data use as required under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

3. There is confusion at DfE about when third parties are a controller or data processor. Our research for the new State of Data 2020 report

found many companies claim to be data processors simply by writing it into a contract. This is wrong. How the data is processed determines the roles, and many companies are often joint data controllers if they determine what to do with pupil data, such as repurposing it for distribution, including research. Companies do not lawfully have authority to do this on their own.

4. The DfE has insufficient controls to protect personal data passed on to commercial users. Do you know what each app and its sub-processors really do, in what country and who “company affiliates” are, in terms and conditions?

5. The ICO also found an over-reliance on using the legal basis of “public task” as the basis for data sharing, and limited understanding of implications when “legitimate interests” is used. This is also true in schools.

6. The DfE fails to provide sufficient training to staff about information governance, data protection, and records and risk management. Given the volume of national data

demands, this should be part of basic teacher training and free CPD.

7. DfE data protection impact assessments are not carried out early enough and sometimes not at all. This is also vital for schools, for example, when partnering with product or research trials. Insist on having a copy of their DPIA and the research ethics approval. If they refuse, ask why and consider if you should rely on trust alone to be sufficiently accountable to parents.

Children's confidential data are collected simply because they go to school. Without parents' permission, their identifying details are distributed to thousands of third parties and used not for the immediate purposes of a child's education, but by companies for profit.

That's why defenddigitalme is calling for an Education and Digital Rights Act and independent oversight under a national guardian just like there is in the NHS. We know where the systemic issues are, and thanks to the ICO investigation into the DfE, we know they start at the very top. Now it's time to address them.

Michael Gove was education secretary in 2012 when the government changed the law to give away millions of children's identifying school records. Will Gavin Williamson fix it?



Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Progress is too slow in letting schools know what to expect. This is what happens when system capacity is systematically eroded, writes Simon Sharp

When I signed a joint letter to the secretary of state along with the Chartered College of Teaching CEO, Alison Peacock, and Sir John Dunford, I was clear that delaying examinations in 2021 and modifications to syllabus content would be an insufficient response to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

I fully understand that while such an approach may be desirable for ministers and many others, it completely overlooks the impact of further disruption to learning which we all know is highly likely. No delay can adequately compensate for the underlying problems of variable teaching time and variable access to remote learning technology. And while I accept the sentiment is to address such problems, it will perversely add advantage to groups less impacted by the pandemic. In other words, it will only exacerbate underlying inequalities.

Like many others, the Chartered Institute of Education Assessors (CIEA) is fully aware that the experience of 2020 has damaged trust in the credibility of the examination system. We cannot afford a re-run. Our conclusion is that grades in 2021 should be calculated on the basis of performance in a combination of external examinations and externally moderated centre-based assessments.

As I understand the situation, ministers are considering further back-up plans to cover all scenarios,



SIMON SHARP

Chair, Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors

Exam delays are only the start of a solution. Where's the rest?

but this requires more urgency. If the syllabi are going to change, albeit for a reduction of content, teachers need time to adapt. And if schools are to be called upon again to provide centre-assessed grades (CAGs) in the event

learning process regardless of the demands made by qualifications.

Schools and colleges need to establish internal arrangements to generate their assessments drawing on a range of candidates'

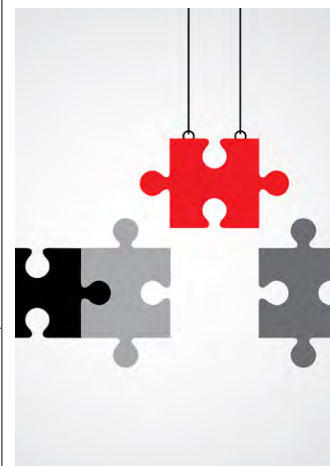
“Delaying exams is an insufficient response to the uncertainty caused by Covid

of students missing examinations, we need to be better prepared than we were last year.

I do not think anyone doubts that teacher assessments are subject to issues of validity and reliability, as are written tests. So it is imperative to minimise adverse effects as far as possible in the time we have available. The CIEA believes this should be a national approach supported by government and Ofqual, which we believe can strengthen internal assessment. Clearly, in the longer term, we should make far greater efforts to improve the level of assessment expertise in our schools, not only to regain public confidence but as a means of improving the teaching and

work. Further, the work needs to be supervised and acceptable standards of performance agreed before moderation across the school – and ideally with other schools – can take place. This is why we advocate for the creation of the role of “lead assessors” in every school and college who, with appropriate support, can manage and quality-assure this process.

We are also aware that such an approach requires a level of skill and understanding that is under-developed, which is why the CIEA was established in the first place following problems with A-level awards in 2002. Over the past decade, the CIEA has not received sustained backing from successive governments and the



role of teachers in the assessment process has been systematically eroded rather than enhanced. This has been to the detriment of the status of the teaching profession and has limited the approaches to assessment deemed politically acceptable.

Even accepting government's intention to keep schools open in all but the most severe circumstances, we must recognise that they will be subjected to a range of situations affecting individuals as well as groups of students. And while schools are making astonishing efforts to support remote working, inequalities abound around access to face-to-face teaching and technology-based support.

Our aim is to remain above politics and to support the system to ensure it is as fair as possible. The reason we wrote to ministers was to offer our help, and that offer remains open. To date, we have not even received an acknowledgement of our proposal – and time is getting very short indeed.

Opinion

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SIR PETER LAMPL

Chair, Sutton Trust and Education Endowment Foundation

The PM's tutoring plans offer hope for undoing Covid damage

Delivered to the right children, one-to-one tuition plans could level the educational playing field, writes Sir Peter Lampl

If you were to look for one powerful reason to explain the yawning achievement gap between working-class and middle-class children who go to the same school, you'd have to go a very long way to find a more persuasive explanation than the preponderance of private tutoring.

In their millions, affluent parents, quite understandably, have for years bought educational advantage for their children at the affordable cost (to them) of typically £28 per hour.

This is one of the many reasons why pupils who are from poorer homes achieve on average so much less at school than their more prosperous peers, even when exposed to the same teachers and the same curriculum.

This injustice is why the prime minister's commitment in his Conservative Party conference speech to expanding one-to-one tutoring to both the highest and lowest achieving students should be so welcome.

"We can all see the difficulties, but I believe such intensive teaching could be transformational, and of massive

reassurance to parents," the prime minister told his virtual audience.

His ambition is not misjudged. The social mobility foundation that I founded and chair, the Sutton Trust, has long argued for better access to tutoring as a way of levelling the playing field between the poorest and richest students.

In a study that we published

only last year, we found that the proportion of 11-16-year-olds in England and Wales who have received tuition rose from 18 per cent in 2005 to 27 per cent this year.

But more than one-third (34 per cent) of children from "high affluence" households have received such tuition at some point, compared with 20 per cent from low affluence households.

There is a reason tutoring is prevalent among middle-class families. It works. According to the Education Endowment Foundation's "Teaching and Learning Toolkit", high-quality tutoring can lead to, on average, five months' additional progress. This has the effect of creating a social mobility "glass floor"



for those who can afford it.

If we're serious about ending education inequality, we need to give young people from lower-income homes access to these same opportunities. And so we were pleased when the prime minister recognised earlier this year that tutoring could help close the achievement gap that had grown still

needed support to pupils who are falling behind, tutoring also has a role to play in supporting high-attaining disadvantaged pupils. It can give them that extra breadth and stretch to help them reach their full potential which can in turn have knock-on effects for university access, which remains highly unequal.

So, it is right that the scope of government-funded tutoring should include those who are highly able, but the focus on lower-income pupils has to remain. If not, there's a serious danger that it will only widen the attainment gap further still.

Before Covid struck, the Sutton Trust, the Education Endowment Foundation and many other committed teachers, heads, educationists, campaigners and politicians had fought a long campaign to close the achievement gap between poor students and their rich classmates. Over a decade we had made slow but distinct progress. That has been wiped out by the events of this horrific year.

If ministers get this right, we might stand a chance of making a real difference to the long-term prospects of the many talented young people this country is going to need to bounce back from Coronavirus and to thrive.

“The focus on lower-income pupils has to remain

further as a result of the Coronavirus closure of all schools.

It is to be hoped that the £350 million that Johnson committed back in June to tutoring (£76 million of which is being delivered by the Sutton Trust's sister charity, the Education Endowment Foundation, which I also chair) will help reverse the damage caused to the prospects of poorer young people by Covid. But more than that, Boris Johnson's (non-specific) commitment to broaden access to tutoring represents not just a chance to repair that damage with a short-term fix, but to go further with a longer-term gambit in the battle to end educational disadvantage.

In addition to providing much-

Opinion

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A new legal duty for schools to provide remote education is impending. Tom Middlehurst sorts the myths from the facts

Next Thursday it will become a legal requirement to provide immediate remote learning for any individual, groups or cohorts of students who cannot attend school because of Covid-19. While the direction has been widely and rightly condemned as heavy-handed, it is about to become statutory nonetheless. Therefore it is crucial that we work with families over the coming weeks to manage expectations on all sides.

A key issue is that remote learning means different things to different people - and the first myth we need to dispel is that schools have to provide live lessons. Some parents, bolstered by certain sections of the commentariat, will expect exactly that. However, there is no mention of it in the guidance. Instead, it includes an ambition that students will have daily contact with teachers and that schools will use a range of tools to teach new material, set assignments and assess students.

Daily contact may be through online learning platforms, where students are able to submit work and questions and have them marked and answered by their teacher.

Likewise, online tools may include or solely be asynchronous resources, such as prerecorded videos and explanations, worksheets and exercises. Indeed, the government-funded Oak National Academy curriculum is entirely asynchronous.

The second possible source of contention is the headline use of the word "immediate". The Department for Education has confirmed this means schools will need to provide



TOM MIDDLEHURST

Curriculum and Inspection
Specialist, ASCL

Busting the myths about remote learning

remote learning for students the first full day they are unable to attend school, but there is acknowledgement that some will be unable to deliver their full curriculum remotely

these ready.

Next, we know that schools - particularly those in disadvantaged communities - continue to report significant barriers to accessing

“Remote learning means different things to different people

overnight. So it is important that parents and students understand that full remote education won't necessarily happen instantly. A phased approach may be needed, and providing a pack of resources is sufficient - at least initially - so schools may want to consider having

remote learning. Schools are already working with families to identify those barriers and doing what they can to remove them. Further support from government has been announced. Schools should ensure they are accessing their full entitlement, but online



remote learning may never be fully achievable, and the expectation is that students without access should be supported with printed resources.

As to remote curriculum, it is expected to be the equivalent length of a normal timetable, reflect the ambitions of the school curriculum, and include a range of subjects each day.

How this is achieved is at the discretion of school leaders, and might include a range of independent tasks with suggested timings for completion.

The direction places a legal duty on schools to provide remote learning only for reception to year 11 students who are unable to attend school due to Covid-19. It does not legally apply to students who are absent for other reasons, including non-Covid related illness, although schools may of course choose to extend their remote learning offer to them.

Finally, if a student is able to attend school and has not been told to remain at home, they have no legal right to remote learning under the direction. Media headlines may encourage parents to think they have a choice between school and home learning. This is not the case.

The next few weeks are likely to be even more challenging with rising infection rates and the prospect of having to provide remote learning to more pupils. The accompanying pressure of the new legal direction is not helpful, but by managing expectations now we can make life easier for everyone and help schools to keep all the plates spinning as we work our way through this next phase.

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Lighting the Way: The Case for Ethical Leadership in Schools

Author: Angela Browne

Publisher: Bloomsbury

Reviewer: Aditi Singh, head of school, Wishmore Cross Academy

Amid this all-encompassing pandemic, schools are hives of activity and understated angst. Never has a need for visionary educational leadership been quite so necessary or apparent.

Thankfully, through the hum of this storm, those leadership voices that ring loudest and clearest are all promoting similar values: a deep-rooted care for and understanding of their pupils, advocacy for community health, and a firm insistence on drawing boundaries around support and accountability for staff.

But such leadership has not just been forged in the fire of this crisis. Circumstances had already made it necessary, and historical factors had precipitated their development. Angela Browne's *Lighting The Way* sets out to explore these as well as the crucial issues today's leaders need to take action on in order for education to evolve to a newer, more nuanced and more mature form – a form the book argues is long overdue.

Browne begins by systematically listing the ways in which education is racing towards a reckoning with itself: the rise in poverty and crumbling social support infrastructure; increasing workloads, lesser autonomy and an exodus of staff too beaten by high-stakes accountability to consider this a fulfilling vocation; a decline in mental health outcomes across communities visible to all but those that continue to drive unsustainable change.

For school leaders to effectively navigate this sea-change, Browne argues, they will first need to have a reckoning with their "self", explicitly

or implicitly. She lays out the various "styles" of leadership and prompts us to explore how versatile we are, but also how honest, and encourages us to acknowledge the "imposter" within. Only by addressing the false selves we present can we decide where to turn next, what moral imperative drives our visions and how to make these known with clarity and integrity to our teams.

In doing so, we also learn the value of boundaries. As leaders of diverse organisations, how do we work with our teams to balance the need both for compassion and precision in our work? The book's vision of ethical leadership is overwhelmingly one of "centeredness" – the singular quality that indicates we have done enough internal work to remain steadfast in crises, be they a global pandemic or epidemics of challenging behaviour, emotional dysregulation and exclusions.

Lighting the Way suggests that, as our understanding of human development and behaviour is changing, we are starting to embed wisdom around emotional regulation into our school and our community leadership. While this has been the basis of nascent school wellbeing programmes, Browne argues it needs to go beyond that and to define truly ethical leadership – the ability to support, direct, coach and

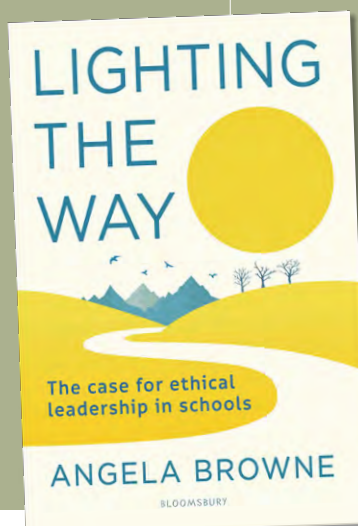
lead while remaining true to our values and ourselves, to hold fast while those around us are changing.

Throughout, Browne is unequivocal that fundamental change is afoot far beyond our classrooms and school walls, and that we will all be a part of this change. This standpoint allows *Lighting the Way* to take a measured view of polarised voices in educational discourse, effectively standing above them and incorporating them as perspectives within a bigger whole. There are questions and prompts towards nourishing ethical behaviours with an emphasis on self-care and a consistent focus on growing and developing our communities, using school leadership as a platform to reach families and the world beyond.

Crises can lead us to question even our most steadfastly held assumptions. Many school leaders today will be asking themselves whether the role they find themselves in is sustainable or even for them. The questions Browne asks us to confront are challenging ones, but they

are more productive. What does it mean to be a leader? How can I walk ahead of my staff to show them the way and allow them to walk ahead and show me? How can I be an adult worthy of imitation by the school community?

School leaders have been and will always be true community leaders, and *Lighting the Way* systematically shows us how to do exactly that for our changing and challenging times.



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is **Melissa Jane**, class teacher, Castle School, Cambridge

@MelJaneSEN

Rose-tinted toxicity: professional unity in unprecedented times

@ShuaibKhan26

Last weekend marked World Mental Health Awareness Day, which can often be an occasion for brands and institutions to talk about looking after your mental health by recommending cups of tea and warm bubble baths. But in education as everywhere else, the solution to widespread mental health problems goes far beyond that – it must be structural, not just individual.

One of the things I love most about my job is the autonomy and trust placed in me as a teacher. In my school, there is an understanding that we all do things slightly differently, in a way that's tailored to our students, and reflective of our own training, experiences, philosophies and personalities. We're far from the only school with this approach, but some have responded to the "new Covid normal" by rethinking their priorities and practices and travelling in the opposite direction, enforcing increasingly rigid control of their students and staff of a type that's altogether too common.

Here, Shuaib Khan sums up how teachers suffer under a "lack of professional trust", characterised by "continuous and sustained monitoring" and how it ultimately leads to anxiety and mental health crises. Khan

TOP BLOGS of the week

refuses to place blame on teachers for failing to manage their own mental health, and instead focuses on practices and cultures that need to change, including political attitudes and structural problems. Tea and bubble baths aren't going to cut it.

Why I'm taking legal action against the government's new school guidelines

@mcg1981

As extensively reported over the past fortnight, at the end of September the Department for Education released new guidelines on curriculum content for newly mandatory Sex and Relationships Education. Among other controversies, the guidance stated that schools cannot use materials or book speakers from organisations that promote "divisive" or "victim" narratives, or have "extreme political stances" including, for example, opposing capitalism.

In this blog for the Runnymede Trust, educator Marsha Garratt outlines how the guidance could affect her work in schools, limiting the topics she can discuss relating to struggles for racial justice. As we approach the mid-point of Black History Month, it is concerning to see black educators feeling restricted in the histories they can share. As Marsha says, "We cannot bring change if we do not know or understand what needs changing."

If I could go back in time

@SayWitYourChest

I was moved to read this account from an anonymous young man about his experience of repeated fixed-term and permanent exclusions throughout his time in education, beginning in year 5. The blog makes painfully clear that repeated exclusion did not help the young writer to change his behaviour, or address its underlying causes. Instead, it caused more and more disengagement, ultimately resulting in the writer's placement in a pupil referral unit (PRU). In his words, "I've wasted a lot of time and it is frustrating."

How I Do It: Building and Using Language Kits

@prAACticalAAC

As we settle into a very unusual academic year, in which communication will be more important than ever, it's important to remember the huge diversity of ways in which our students express themselves. October is International AAC Awareness Month – that's Alternative and Augmented Communication, meaning any kind of communication method a person uses instead of, or alongside, speech. Stephen Hawking's voice-output communication aid is a familiar example, but AAC can be much more low-tech too – a grid of symbols, a sign language system, or a whiteboard and pen. It's a huge part of what I do on a daily basis. I couldn't do my job without the wisdom of speech therapists, both directly through in-school consultation and indirectly through the wealth of generously shared resources online through blogs and social media.

Carole Zangari's is one such post – a useful example of how opportunities for communication can be embedded across the curriculum by making up themed "language kits" containing resources for play and communication about a topic. Making sure a student's iPad is charged is not enough – whether it's astrophysics or teddy bears, we need to provide exciting things for them to talk about.

Research

The Chartered College of Teaching will review a research development each half term. Contact @CatScutt if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

Are exams really the only option?

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

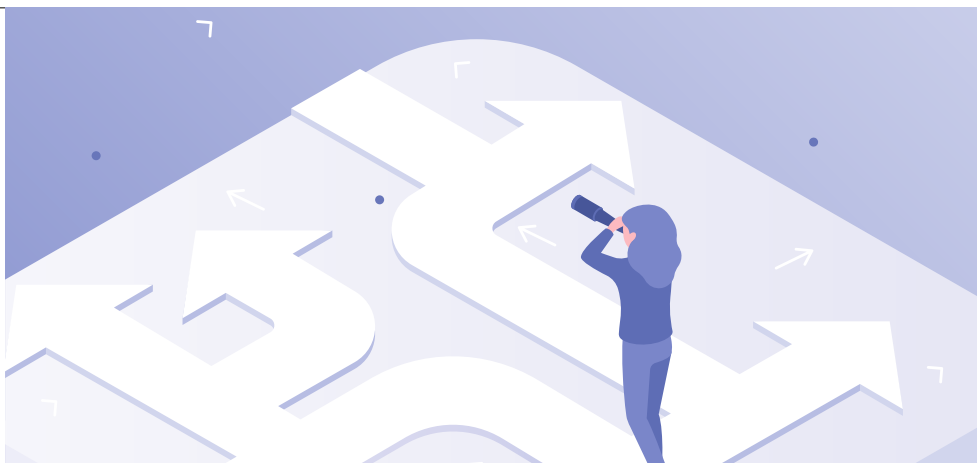
I'm always envious of anyone who is absolutely certain of the best thing to do, based on "the evidence". But I'm also slightly bemused by it. "What the evidence says" is rarely, if ever, simple. Even when there appears to be a clear answer, there are caveats, boundary conditions, trade-offs – and context is key.

A good example of this is the debate around next year's round of summer exams – which we've heard this week will go ahead, albeit to a slightly adapted timetable. Many argued that proceeding with exams was critical, no matter what. Others argued we should ditch them – perhaps for ever.

Given school closures, variation in access to remote learning, and uncertainty about what will be possible or safe next year, there are certainly challenges in relying on exams next summer. But is there a viable alternative?

Kaili Rimfeld and colleagues argue that their research shows teacher assessment is as reliable and stable as standardised exam scores. But on further reading, using teacher assessment to predict pupils' GCSE and A-level grades had only 90 per cent of the accuracy of using past test scores. They suggest the difference lies in factors that may affect exam performance in addition to academic ability or preparation, such as anxiety and the pupil's beliefs about their abilities.

Writing well before the current crisis, Daisy Christodoulou reminds us of compelling evidence that teacher assessment can be (unconsciously) biased against particular groups of students. Rob Coe notes that this may include FSM pupils and those with EAL, with SEN, or with challenging behaviour. There is also evidence that stereotypes around ethnicity can influence teacher assessment.



This may be difficult to swallow, but if we want a serious discussion about teacher assessment, we need to be able to reflect on it – and on the reasons it may happen.

A less convincing argument against teacher assessment is that we can't trust teachers – they'll submit "implausibly high" predictions. As Sam Freedman argued on Twitter, this is not teachers exaggerating pupils' capabilities. Their predictions can't take into account, for example, a pupil missing out a question accidentally or a particularly challenging question. Teachers cannot know who might be affected in this way, so their predictions may overall appear inflated – but it would be absurd to suggest teachers should be downgrading their high expectations of pupils. We must trust teachers' integrity.

Of course, the validity of any test depends not (just) on the test itself but, as Dylan Wiliam argues, on the inferences we draw from it. Considering purpose is therefore important. Exams are used to judge pupils, to decide college or university places and employment. But they are also used to measure schools' performance – and,

in some cases, even for judging the performance of individual teachers (though as EPI point out, there are all sorts of issues with this!). And as Stuart Lock and others state in a letter to the Daily Telegraph, they provide

a motivator for pupils and a celebration of their achievement.

There are other issues, too – moving to teacher assessment in place of high-stakes exams could fundamentally change the role and focus of teachers, damaging the relationship between schools, pupils and parents.

But perhaps it's not one or the other. Dylan Wiliam argued back in 1998 that teacher assessment could play a key role in summative assessment – alongside exams. A recent joint letter signed by the Chartered College suggests that centre-based assessment should be adopted for summer 2021 in addition to exams, given the current uncertainty. Efforts must of course be made to mitigate the limitations of teacher assessment, and exams must be sufficiently flexible to recognise the varied interruptions to education that have occurred.

This summer's "mutant algorithm" fiasco illustrates a critical point about research. Something can appear to work when aggregated. But we're not just interested in what works overall – we need to consider the individual, too. And this is where professional judgment comes in. Teacher expertise is crucial – which is why knowledge and understanding of assessment is tested as part of both the teacher and school leader routes to Chartered Status.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

MONDAY

Readers will remember Gavin Williamson has been repeatedly criticised throughout the pandemic for being conspicuous by his absence during the various crises facing the education sector.

And it was confirmed this week he's perfected his Harry Houdini impression after he went missing during education questions in the House of Commons.

After moving on to the "topical questions" round of the session, which involves Williamson being asked about his departmental responsibilities, the ed sec was



Where's Gav? MPs look around for education secretary, who is nowhere to be found

nowhere to be seen, having ducked out of the chamber a few minutes before.

Universities minister Michelle Donelan, who had the misfortune to be nearest the despatch box during the incident, did her utmost to hold the fort with a bland answer on T-levels (which isn't in her brief), while shadow education secretary Kate Green dryly suggested that she start by asking the schools minister a

question "since he is here".

Suddenly, Williamson bounced back into the chamber to a chiding from the Speaker, who said he should "apologise to the House, because it was rather discourteous of him to disappear".

"Mr Speaker, I apologise for being a little late," Williamson replied, "I got waylaid by a colleague asking a question outside the chamber, and I did not realise the speed at which you were working through the order paper: it was so much more efficient than the last Speaker."

It was an interesting excuse, but didn't cut it, as Sir Lindsay Hoyle quickly reminded Gav that topical questions always begin at 3.15pm.

Maybe less Harry Houdini and more Mr Bean...

Also during the education questions session, schools minister Nick Gibb stressed that the government would have "more to say" later in the autumn on the issue of grading for the 2021 exams.

I mean, that's totally fine then Gibbo. It's not like the government has had months to get its act together on this.

TUESDAY

Congratulations are in order to the wider political world, which has now been well and truly introduced to Lord Agnew this week.

The former education minister, who will be remembered by loyal

readers as someone who didn't exactly mince his words (especially the word "champagne"), left Sanctuary Buildings in February for a new life at the Treasury and Cabinet Office, where he's helping with Brexit preparations.

Agnew didn't disappoint during his appearance in front of the commons Treasury committee this week, with comments about the Northern Irish border like "I can't pretend that I am not worried that we haven't nailed all this down", and "we just need to be as ready as we can".

And then, in a throwback to his glory days of blaming schools for having no cash because they didn't have a grip on spending, he also told MPs that traders had their "head in the sand" and were "not as ready as should be" for Brexit.

What about offering up a bottle of champagne for any firms that can prove they are Brexit ready, Theo?

THURSDAY

Farewell, then, Margaret Greenwood, who served as shadow schools minister from April until this week, when she resigned in order to vote against the so-called "Spycops bill".

She was one of 35 MPs from the left of the party who voted against the bill, defying orders from the Labour leader to sit on the fence and abstain.

She was joined in the "no" lobby by her former boss Rebecca Long-Bailey and former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.



Hollygirt
SCHOOL

Peridot



HEADTEACHER

About the role

Hollygirt School has been striving to maintain its unique position within the Nottingham independent sector and the relatively new Trustee Board are keen to build on the significant achievements to date, and develop a strategy to increase capacity and income for future years. The Headteacher will work with the Board of Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team to provide leadership, vision, and direction for the school. The new Headteacher will be the key driver in further improving the offer and making it the "school of choice" for Nottinghamshire families.

The Headteacher will be responsible for the day-to-day management of all school operations encouraging a culture that balances the promotion of excellence, equality and high expectations for all with a commitment to structured pastoral support. The Headteacher will lead the SLT in delivering a curriculum aimed at continuous improvement for all pupils, including those with SEND. At Hollygirt, we celebrate the achievements and progress of all. The Headteacher will work with the Bursar to manage resources effectively and efficiently and look for opportunities to increase revenue streams to improve teaching and learning and to provide a safe and harmonious school environment.

Who we are looking for

We are seeking a candidate with successful experience of leading and managing improvement strategies and successful change programmes. This is a great opportunity to use your skills in strategic planning, and to develop and implement initiatives to increase numbers on roll and revenue streams. The school is looking for DfE recognised qualified teacher status and experience of leadership in an educational setting. The candidate will demonstrate a proven track record of either raising attainment or sustaining good or outstanding achievement and progress in a whole school environment. In keeping with the school's strong ethos, you must understand the needs of all pupils aged 3-16 to facilitate an inclusive school approach.

You will be expected to have high order analytical and problem-solving skills and the ability to make informed judgements. In consultation with the SLT, you will be required to make and present strategic recommendations to the board. A key part of the role will be marketing the school and promoting all the benefits that we have to offer – you will be representing the school to all stakeholders, prospective parents, the local community, press and the independent school sector. Therefore, the successful individual will be a natural and a compelling communicator who is able to present confidently and professionally in a variety of media to a range of audiences.

For more information and to apply, please visit the job page on Peridot Partners' website: <https://bit.ly/3d2YJTR>

To arrange a confidential chat, please contact our lead consultants at Peridot Partners:

Sally Lawson-Ritchie | sally@peridotpartners.co.uk | 07904 158737

Drew Richardson-Walsh | drew@peridotpartners.co.uk | 07739 364033

Closing date: 12pm, Monday 23rd November 2020 | Salary: £65,000 - £75,000

Hollygirt School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment and undergo appropriate checks.



Saint GREGORY'S
Bath

"In Christ we flourish"

Saint Gregory's, Bath
Combe Hay Lane,
Bath, BA2 8PA
T 01225 832873

Deputy Headteacher: Pastoral

This is an excellent opportunity for a talented and enthusiastic colleague to join the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at Saint Gregory's and to be instrumental in continuing to develop and enhance our pastoral provision as a centre for excellence to ensure the best possible outcomes for all our children and young people. The successful candidate will bring considerable passion and commitment to the role, working across the school to create a common vision of excellence, helping to make Saint Gregory's a truly exceptional place to learn and work in.

Full time, permanent

Salary: Leadership Scale L15-L19

The closing date is midnight on **Sunday 18 October 2020**

Interviews will be held on **21 and 22 October 2020**

Visit www.st-gregorys.org.uk to apply

Saint Gregory's is an equal opportunities employer. We are committed to the safeguarding and welfare of our students and expect all staff to share this commitment. An enhanced disclosure from the DBS is required for all successful applicants.

The Active Learning Trust

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ALT wishes to appoint a second Assistant Director of Education to this interesting and challenging new post working with our schools across Cambridgeshire & Suffolk.

The Trust has 21 Schools across the primary secondary and special phases. As part of the central team you will have a successful record of leadership at school/MAT or LA level and will work Trust-wide as the key professional adviser on standards, curriculum, and improvement with our family of Headteachers. They will look to you, and rely on you to mentor their activities and approaches, as well as to encourage, challenge, support & guide them in delivering constant and evidence-based improvement.

Salary package expected to be up to £80k pa.

To discuss the role informally contact our Director of Education
David Hilton. david.hilton@activelearningtrust.org

To apply – complete an application form available via
(www.activelearningtrust.org) or directly from
jan.steel@activelearningtrust.org

Closing date 5 November 2020.

Likely interview 12 November 2020.

Lexden Springs School

Deputy Head Teacher SLD/PMLD Special School

Are you committed and passionate about therapeutic SEND Education? Are you an outstanding teacher who is willing to go above and beyond to deliver the very best opportunities and outcomes for all pupils?

We are looking for an experienced school leader with extensive experience in a SEND school environment to join our strong successful established team. This is a real opportunity to make a difference for the children that we teach. This is a role which combines strategic development with operational delivery daily.

At Lexden Springs School, Positive Behaviour Support and Person-Centred Approaches are of paramount importance and you will contribute to the continued strategic and operational development of this.

As a member of the SLT you will play a critical role in the translation of its vision into clear objectives that promote and sustain measurable school development; ensuring that the school continuously improves and is aspirational for our students.

For more info email hr@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk

EDU WEEK JOBS

SCHOOLS WEEK

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The Russett School

Executive Head Teacher (Cheshire)

Leadership: L27 to L32

Contract Type: Full Time

Contract Term: Permanent

An exciting opportunity has arisen at the Russett Learning Trust for the post of Executive Head Teacher. The Trustees of the Russett Learning Trust and Governors of the Russett School are looking to recruit a dedicated, inspiring and exceptional person with drive and commitment to lead and develop the Russett School and support the Board with the growth of the Russett Learning Trust.

We are seeking a candidate with experience of successful strategic headship/leadership in the mainstream primary/special school sector and/or as part of a Multi Academy Trust or Single Academy Trust.

The Russett Learning Trust was established in September 2015 and the Russett School is a special academy providing outstanding education for pupils and young people from ages 2 to 19 years with Severe Learning Difficulties, Speech and Language Difficulties and Complex Needs.

Working at the Russett School offers the opportunity to work with a highly trained and committed staff team who are dedicated to the delivery of outstanding learning to all our students.

The fundamental vision of The Russett Learning Trust is to be a centre of excellence in providing outstanding training, education and care. If you share this vision you will be well placed to join us and make a difference.

The Russett Learning Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of its pupils and expects all those working at the Trust to share this commitment. Clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service is required prior to appointment.

To apply please complete a Russett Learning Trust's application form together with a covering letter explaining why you are suitable for this position.

Potential candidates will have an opportunity to tour the academy on **Wednesday 14th October** or **Monday 19th October**. To arrange your visit please contact jhughes@russett.cheshire.sch.uk or call **01606 853005**.

Applications are returnable to jhughes@russett.cheshire.sch.uk .

Closing Date: Friday 6th November 2020 at noon.

Shortlisting: Tuesday 10th November 2020

Interviews: Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th November 2020

Start Date: 1st September 2021