

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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How to keep schools open and confidence high



The second wave of lost learning is already here



5 tips to get us through to Xmas



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## Inspections without grades – Ofsted plots January comeback

- Ministers considering monitoring visit-style inspections for new year
- Inspections wouldn't result in grades, but would be step up from 'visits'
- But proposals 'don't solve any problems' say heads, as lockdown begins

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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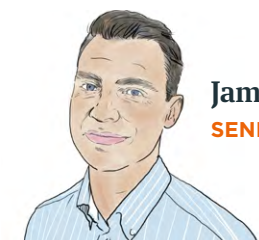
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## EDU WEEK JOBS



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**HOLLYGIRT SCHOOL - HEADTEACHER - £65,000 - £75,000**

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### The CEO putting the arts at the heart of curriculum



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### Settling Durand dispute 'will hit services for vulnerable'

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# Proposals for inspections from January - but without grades

JAMES CARR

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EXCLUSIVE

Ministers are considering new proposals from Ofsted for inspections to restart again this January, but without grades being issued.

Full inspections have been paused since the outbreak of coronavirus back in March but are scheduled to start up again in January.

There has been sustained pressure from unions to delay the restart, which has been amplified following the announcement of a second lockdown.

*Schools Week* understands Department for Education officials met with Ofsted this week to consider plans. One of the proposals on the table is for inspections to restart in January, but for them to be more akin to a monitoring visit – which wouldn't result in a grade for the school.

This suggestion has been put forward in recognition of the disruption schools are already facing in light of the pandemic and has been pitched somewhere between full inspections and the "visits" that have been carried out this autumn.

However Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said it is "hard to see what this would achieve, other than to give the inspectorate something to do".

He said inspections should not resume in January because "schools have too many plates to spin already, managing Covid protocols and catch-up support". He also raised the "health risks of having inspectors going in and out of schools when we need to minimise contacts" and that "routine inspections would be meaningless with so many pupils and staff having to intermittently self-isolate".

"It would not resolve any of these issues simply to remove grades and go ahead with routine inspections anyway," he added.

"The government and Ofsted would best support schools by relieving them of the burden of an accountability system that is not appropriate for the circumstances of a national emergency and allowing them to



get on with the challenging task at hand."

Since September the inspectorate has been visiting schools in more informal "visits" that focus on issues such as the return to full education, how pupils have picked up the curriculum and preparedness for remote learning.

Ofsted announced via Twitter on Monday evening that these visits would be carried out remotely during the national lockdown – which started yesterday (Thursday) and is due to end on December 2.

It is understood the proposals tabled by Ofsted would not form a new type of inspection but would fall under its existing powers set out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Monitoring inspections are usually performed at schools previously judged 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' to assess progress and to encourage improvement.

While monitoring visits do result in a published report, such a visit does not indicate a grade nor carry out learner, employer, parent/carer or staff surveys.

However, monitoring visits do provide progress judgments of 'insufficient progress', 'reasonable progress' or 'significant progress'.

An Ofsted

spokesperson said: "We're carefully considering how we return to inspection; the timing remains under review, as does the form any inspection would take."

But Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary for the NEU, said the inspections were "the very last thing that should be on schools' minds as they get through a very challenging year".

On Wednesday, former education secretary Baroness Estelle Morris questioned the role Ofsted should be playing in light of the pandemic during an online event hosted by the NAHT union.

Morris said she feared Ofsted did not have "the ability to change" the role they perform within the sector and while the government did need to gather information on best practices and where schools need extra help she was "not convinced this year that Ofsted are the organisation for that".

She said: "I wish I could say that Ofsted is the type of organisation that can change and meet those needs in this present year but my thinking at the moment is it can't do that so it should concentrate on what happens after this."

Morris also called the return to inspection in January "nonsense" and said the government should postpone such action until the next academic year.



Baroness Estelle Morris

# Coronavirus outbreak

## Ofqual goes public on call for 'generous' grades

**JOHN DICKENS**

**@JOHNDICKENSSW**

Ofqual's chief regulator has told ministers she wants to compensate pupils for the pandemic's "baleful" impact on their schooling with "more generous" national performance standards in next year's exams and beyond.

In a letter to the government published today, Dame Glenys Stacey said it was "important" that the regulator recognised "in every way possible" the impact of lost learning.

However, she said this must be done "without bending examinations out of shape".

"We are thinking carefully about the performance standard that should be aimed for in all these qualifications, in 2021.

"We will be intent on making sure that results are sufficiently valid and fair across subjects, but there is nevertheless in our view an opportunity to recognise, and to compensate for, the baleful impact of the pandemic for all students qualifying in 2021 (and possibly beyond), by setting



Dame Glenys Stacey

national performance standards more generously than in normal times."

It's the biggest hint yet that some of the grade inflation seen in this year's results, where centre assessed grades were awarded, will continue.

National performance standards are the level of performance that students must show to achieve a particular grade. Ofqual has the ability to impact this, for instance by lowering the level of marks required to achieve a specific grade through its comparable outcomes approach.

Unions had called on the regulator to peg grades somewhere between 2019 and 2020.

But James Handscombe, principal at Harris Westminster Sixth Form, writing

for *Schools Week* last month, said the 2021 cohort had "all lost out on education and will simply not know as much as non-Covid afflicted year groups. This doesn't make them less clever."

He said grades were not "sweeties to be handed out as compensation to children who have had a hard time – they are measurements that mean something. Or at least they should be."

"We should try to make sure they catch up on lost knowledge, but to claim through awarded grades that they are academically superior to previous groups is obvious nonsense that will invite critics to devalue their qualifications."

In her letter, Stacey also said the regulator was "looking at what further steps we could take to make these exams less daunting a prospect for students, while of course making sure they remain a fair test of knowledge and understanding in each subject.

"I look forward to advising you of the options here – particularly where they could have implications for government's curriculum intentions in each subject."

She said the regulator hoped to share its plans with the sector this month.

## Second lockdown PPE costs add to school budget worries

Ministers have come under renewed pressure to provide additional resources after rules on face coverings were extended to all secondary schools in England.

From Monday, pupils and staff will have to wear face coverings in communal areas of secondary schools, though some individuals are exempt. Primary schools will continue to have "discretion" over whether adults must wear face coverings if social distancing is "not possible".

But the rule change, announced on Wednesday night, has added to growing concerns about school resources, with ministers continuing to insist schools can cover the additional costs incurred through their existing budgets.

Vic Goddard, head of Passmores Academy in Essex, which was previously subject to tier 2 local restrictions, said his school was already providing around 200 masks a day to pupils whose parents don't provide them, and that



costs were "really adding up".

Goddard said his school had already lost £200,000 in additional costs and lost income due to Covid. A pack of 200 masks costs around £18 on Amazon, so providing masks over the course of the month-long lockdown is likely to cost hundreds of pounds.

There are also growing calls for the government to cover the costs of hiring supply cover for staff absence, with the new lockdown restrictions likely to compound shortages with staff off work self-isolating and extremely vulnerable employees told to stay away.

Although the government ran an exceptional costs fund for costs incurred by schools

during the first lockdown, the fund was not extended into this school year.

"We have received reports of schools having to spend £6,000 per week on supply cover, and this situation is going to become worse," said Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL school leaders' union. "Schools and colleges cannot sustain these costs."

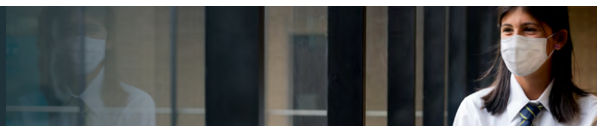
The timing of the rule change, coming on the eve of new lockdown restrictions for the country and with just days to go until the changes have to be enacted in schools, has also been criticised.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the school leaders' union NAHT, said on Wednesday night that it was "ridiculous that this new guidance has landed on school leaders' desks less than 24 hours before the start of the national lockdown".

"There is very little in the guidance that could not have been communicated with schools 72 hours ago."



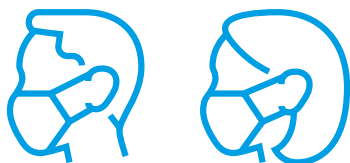
# Coronavirus outbreak



## National lockdown: the rules for schools

The government issued guidance for schools on the eve of the new national lockdown. Here's what you need to know

### SCHOOLS WEEK REPORTER @SCHOOLSWEEK



#### Face masks in secondaries

Pupils and staff in all secondary schools should wear face masks when "moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained". This also applies to pupils on dedicated school transport.

However, the guidance goes on to say that "some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings and we expect adults and pupils to be sensitive to those needs". Schools have until Monday to introduce the changes.

Coverings are not mandated in primary schools and other settings that teach year 6 and below. But the government said these schools had "discretion" to recommend the use of face coverings for adults on-site where social distancing was "not possible".

#### Contain framework suspended – 'no plans' for rota

The Department for Education has also confirmed that the "Contain framework", which brought in the rules on face coverings in local lockdown areas, will not apply during the national lockdown. Before the national lockdown, tier 1 areas of the Contain framework required masks to be worn in the communal areas of



secondary schools.

Under tier 2, secondary schools would have been moved on to rota systems. Tiers 3 and 4 involved wider closures.

The DfE said the Contain framework would apply again once national lockdown was lifted, with more detail "in due course".

The department also insisted there were "currently no plans for school closures or to implement rota systems".

#### Extremely vulnerable to work from home ...

Workers considered clinically extremely vulnerable should work from home or, if they could not, not to go to work at all.



The DfE's specific guidance "advised" these staff to work from home. When asked about the discrepancy in statements, the department said the difference in language was "incidental" and the rules were the same for all workers.

Staff in this category should "talk to their employers about how they will be supported, including to work from home where possible".

#### ... but most children no longer need to shield

The guidance states that most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable "no longer need to follow original shielding advice", and that parents should speak to their child's GP or specialist clinic.



However, children that doctors confirmed were clinically extremely vulnerable should

"not attend education whilst the national restrictions are in place". Schools would need to make "appropriate arrangements" to enable them to learn at home.

Children and staff who lived with someone who was clinically extremely vulnerable, but who were not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, could still attend. Those considered clinically vulnerable, but not extremely vulnerable, could also still attend.

#### School sports are mostly allowed

Schools have "flexibility" to decide on what physical education or activity they provide. Sports whose national governing bodies have developed guidance alongside government rules are permitted. However, competition between schools is banned.



Outdoor sports should be prioritised. Natural ventilation flows in large indoor spaces should be maximised, with "scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene".

External facilities can be used in line with government guidance, and schools can work with external coaches or organisations for curricular activities.

Schools offering extra-curricular activities should "only do so where it is reasonably necessary to support parents to work, search for work, or undertake training or education, or where the provision is being used for the purposes of respite care".

Music, dance and drama can continue, so long as safety precautions are undertaken.



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# Schools wait for £50m in Covid costs

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EXCLUSIVE

The government is yet to pay out a third of the cash requested to deal with the costs associated with keeping schools safe during the coronavirus pandemic, despite already settling 95 per cent of claims.

Almost £50 million claimed by schools has still not been paid out of the exceptional costs fund.

The Department for Education received 14,075 claims totalling £147.9 million under its "exceptional costs" reimbursement scheme, a Freedom of Information request by *Schools Week* has revealed.

The scheme only covered the cost of additional cleaning where there was a positive Covid case, rather than preventive measures, alongside costs of keeping schools open over holidays for vulnerable pupils and free school meal vouchers in some circumstances.

Applications were also only accepted for costs incurred between March and July this year.

The government said this week that £102 million had been paid out, representing 13,420 claims that they said were "in-scope" applications.

But that leaves £46.9 million that schools believe should be reimbursed – nearly a third of the total value of the applications.

The DfE said processes to determine whether these claims would be accepted had started, but it's not clear how much will be reimbursed.

Julia Harnden, funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said the unpaid claims were "simply not acceptable".

"The criteria for accessing the exceptional costs fund are too limited and the list of eligible costs is too restrictive. Schools and colleges must be supported financially during the current pandemic and must have confidence that all additional coronavirus-related costs will be reimbursed."

Schools had started the autumn term "out of pocket" and the unpaid claims must be paid back "as a matter of urgency".

Extra cash spent on Covid-related issues could only be claimed back if existing resources could not meet the cost – with funding capped at £75,000 for the largest schools and £25,000 for the smallest.

The scope was also limited to specific items,



such as increased premises-related costs, free school meals for eligible children not attending school and additional cleaning after a confirmed or suspected Covid case.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said this week: "When it comes to our children there really is nothing we wouldn't do to make sure they get the education they deserve."

But unions say the £50 million outstanding contradicts his claim.

The government has also rebuffed appeals for a second exceptional costs fund to be run for the new academic year.

A survey from the NAHT school leaders' union last month found about 75 per cent of the 2,000-plus respondents had not yet received any of the exceptional costs funding.

Of those who had received cash, 52 per cent said their schools had been reimbursed less than half of what they claimed.

The DfE previously confirmed schools that incurred extra costs during the wider reopenings would have to use their existing budget.

It told schools to increase the cleaning of surfaces and equipment, as well as to provide hand sanitiser for pupils, although guidance said schools were "not eligible to make claims for any additional costs associated with more pupils returning to school".

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT, said: "These costs are not optional, they are required by the government's own guidance.

"It is frankly baffling that the government is refusing to provide schools with any financial support when it comes to Covid costs this term.

"School budgets were under huge pressure already and this could be enough to send many over the edge."

The union's survey found schools had spent on average £8,017 on Covid-related costs this term – about £170 million nationwide.

This is on top of the estimated £212 million to get pupils back to school in June and July.

The survey also found schools were losing an average of £9,755 in income this term because of, for example, the inability to rent their sports halls during the pandemic. This represents about £200 million nationwide and comes on top of the estimated £330 million lost last year.

And analysis from Parentkind, the largest parent-teacher association (PTA), this week estimated schools could also lose up to £42 million from PTAs as Covid restrictions forced the cancellation of traditional fundraising events.

But a DfE spokesperson said: "On average, costs to schools to become Covid-secure will have been a relatively small proportion of their core funding for each pupil, which for secondary schools has increased to a minimum of £5,150, the first year of the biggest increase to core school funding in a decade.

"On top of the core funding schools are receiving, and continued to receive throughout the pandemic, we provide pupil premium funding worth £2.4 billion each year to support the most disadvantaged pupils."



Gavin Williamson



## Investigation

# NTP providers issued funding threat over speaking out amid conflict of interest and cap concerns

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Approving tutoring providers have been warned any future funding could be jeopardised if they speak about the scheme publicly without getting approval from the National Tutoring Programme.

The government's flagship NTP scheme launched this week, with schools able to apply for subsidised tuition through 32 approved providers.

But schools have been told they could face caps on the number of pupils they can put forward, with capacity for the programme to reach only 250,000 pupils.

The list of providers, of which 21 were for-profit organisations, has also prompted concerns over conflict of interests, including the chief executive of one of the organisations running the scheme and the national schools commissioner.

Meanwhile, providers whose applications were unsuccessful are now plotting to set up their own initiative.

## Strict media process 'not surprising'

Schools Week understands that providers have been told they must get any external communications signed off by the NTP. Failure to do so could jeopardise future funding decisions, providers' induction packs state.

Schools Week also understands a separate grant agreement goes further, stating all communications regarding the NTP require sign-off.

While some providers have expressed unease at this, Geoff Barton, general secretary of headteachers' union ASCL, said he was "not surprised to learn there is a strict process in place for signing off external communications" as it is a high-profile scheme with a "great deal of media interest".

He added: "We would expect the NTP to be completely transparent about how the scheme progresses and our experience is that they have communicated with us very openly throughout its development and launch."

## Big demand as spurned tutors cry foul

Among those chosen organisations providing tutors who are PhD students, qualified teachers



## 'News of a cap, in areas where demand is "very high", has been criticised'

and volunteers, and the funding each partner receive will depend on the number of pupils they support.

James Grant, co-founder of MyTutor, said a high level of demand "has definitely materialised". Some schools were asking for tuition for 100 pupils, but they are aiming to work with 50- to 60-strong groups.

He added they have measures to make sure tuition is spread "fairly" across their allocation of 600 schools.

News of a cap, which would be introduced in areas where demand is "very high", has been criticised.

Nick Brook, deputy general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, said the NTP was "severely constrained by the number of tutors available" and said allocations must not be made on a "first come, first served basis".

"Schools aren't booking concert tickets here, hoping for the best seats, so allocations must come down to more than timing and good luck."

Schools Week also revealed last month that nearly half of the promised £350 million for the NTP this year remains unallocated.

John Nichols, president of The Tutors' Association, which represents some of the 393 providers who applied, said a better model would be to make "any provider that reaches a certain quality standard eligible to gain the government subsidy, as otherwise it is quite a distortion to the market".

The group is now considering launching its own "complementary initiative" to provide "experience tuition support to those students most in need across the UK".

But the NTP says a wide range of providers have been funded, mobilising "a whole range of tutors" through a "tough assessment process". It is understood that a small number of providers are still yet to be announced as final formalities were being agreed.

The government has also signalled its intent to

Continued on next page

# Investigation

extend the programme beyond this year. A pre-procurement notice on Monday asked for the sector's view on how the scheme can be rolled out after August 2021, and to recruit more tutors.

## Scheme dogged by conflict accusations

The TTA is also pushing for details of how providers' applications were scored to be published, amid conflict of interest concerns.

Professor Becky Francis, chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, which runs the £76 million Tuition Partners pillar of the programme, was until recently a non-executive director of Pearson. The education giant was one of the chosen providers but does not have a history of providing tutoring.

When asked about this, the NTP said Francis resigned from her Pearson role when she was "made aware [the organisation] was being recommended for funding". This was "to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest", they added. She also played "no part in...its assessment".

Pearson said Francis was not involved in their bid, which was selected by a "ring-fenced team" within EEF.

The Unity Schools Partnership, which has 29 academies in eastern England, is spearheading a school-led tutoring agency Schools Partnership Tutors, which has been selected as partner.

The trust's chief executive and former regional schools commissioner Tim Coulson is also the independent chair of the Norwich Opportunity Area. The Department for Education's 12 Opportunity Areas have been given additional NTP provision.

But Coulson said after declaring his interest to the Norwich area "it has been decided that they will not be buying any tutoring direct from SP Tutors".

The Brilliant Club, which aims to "re-engage and rebuild pupils' confidence in core curriculum subjects by working with a PhD subject expert tutor", has also been selected.

Sitting on its trustees are vice-chair James Turner, CEO of the Sutton Trust, one of the five charities that are overseeing the NTP, and national schools commissioner Dominic Herrington.

They say they have followed Charity Commission guidance on declarations of interest and that they were assessed against the same criteria as other bidders.

The Sutton Trust emphasised the EEF ran the selection and that Turner, who played "no part" in the bid, will step down as a trustee next year

# National Tutoring Programme

when his second term comes to an end.

The charity's CEO Anne-Marie Canning, volunteer independent chair of Bradford Opportunity Area, declared her interest as an OA chair and CEO at the first OA meeting she attended since the NTP announcement, the DfE said.

## Applicants appointed on 'quality of provision'

The NTP said it is not unknown for education charity trustees to sit on several boards in the sector, as many organisations want their expertise.

But they said none of the individuals we've highlighted played "any role" in the selection process and conflicts of interest related to participants in the selection process were declared.

The NTP says applicants were appointed "based on their safeguarding records, experience and quality of provision" and that the criteria are published on their website.

But Nichols said, "We should be conscious of how transparent the process is and expect full details to be published".

"The NTP should say: 'Here's the basis on which we scored them, here's the unsuccessful applications and here's how they did' and there can be a legitimate questions if organisations have been selected which might lack the capacity to deliver."

The programme is offering individual feedback to unsuccessful applicants so they can be "in a better position to secure funding if any future NTP funding opportunities become available".

Education secretary Gavin Williamson urged schools to make use of the scheme, adding: "We need to do everything in our power to help pupils make up for any lost time, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds."

## THE CHOSEN PROVIDERS:

1-2-1 mentors  
Action Tutoring  
Career Tree  
CoachBright  
Conexus Tuition Franchising Limited  
Connex Education Partnership Ltd  
EM Tuition  
FFT Education Ltd  
Fleet Tutors  
Fresh Start in Education Ltd  
Lancashire County Council  
TLC Live  
Learning Academies Ltd  
Manning's Tutors Ltd  
MyTutor  
Pearson PLC  
PET-XI  
Protocol Education Limited  
Quest for Learning  
Randstad Public Services Limited  
Professional Tutoring Partnership  
Schools Partnership Tutors  
TalentEd  
Targeted Provision Ltd  
Teaching Personnel Limited  
Tes Supply  
The Brilliant Club  
The Tutor Trust  
Tute  
University of Sunderland  
Third Space Learning  
White Rose Maths

# Private suppliers tout 'rapid' Covid tests to schools for £450 a box

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

Headteachers are being urged to check the legality of Covid tests from private suppliers after new "rapid" antigen tests started being offered on the open market, with one school quoted £450 for a box of 20.

The Department of Health and Social Care said all tests bought from private companies must have a CE mark or "valid exemption" to be cleared for use in the UK, and said schools doing their own testing had a legal duty to report confirmed Covid-19 cases.

It comes as rapid antigen tests, which provide a result within as little as 15 minutes, are becoming more widely available.

Andy Lewis, deputy headteacher at St Bonaventure's School in London, was approached on Tuesday by a firm called NxtGen Office Supplies offering boxes of 20 antigen tests for £450 each.

The tests, which are described by the company as "CE marked" and "fully approved", claim to have a 15-minute result time.

Lewis told Schools Week he'd been tempted, given the amount of time staff were spending at home waiting for a test.

"I can absolutely see why people would do it," he said. "In the grand scheme of things £450 isn't the end of the world, especially when we're paying so much for so many supply teachers."

"Last year I think we had one or two supply teachers in a whole year. Now we've got two or three in a day. Therefore it could be a sound investment. But then we'd be going into the realms of taking on a clinical role with this. An extra responsibility."

The extra responsibility resting on schools that carry out their own tests includes notifying Public Health England about every positive case. According to DHSC, they had a duty to do so under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010.

Schools Week contacted NxtGen to ask for



more information about the tests and how many schools had been approached and had taken up the offer, but a spokesperson declined to comment.

The news has prompted questions about why free antigen tests aren't yet available to schools.

Settings have so far only been provided with a small number of home-testing kits for those who can't get tests via another route. But these are not antigen tests and must be sent off by post.

Prime minister Boris Johnson told parliament earlier this week the government was "massively expanding testing for schools", and Downing Street later said he was referring to the development of antigen tests. They would not provide a timescale for when such a scheme would be introduced, but a city-wide, mass-testing trial is due to start in Liverpool today.

A spokesperson for the NAHT school leadership union said state-funded schools "should not have to purchase additional tests from commercial organisations".

"The government should ensure that there are enough tests supplied routinely, so that schools always have enough. We would hope that commercial companies don't look at schools as an easy target for marketing expensive Covid solutions."

Lewis also questioned why the rapid tests were

already available on the open market before being provided to schools for free.

"Why have companies got this availability when I've got members of staff waiting long periods of time for a test result?" he said. "We've got staff who have been out for a week waiting for results."

"I'm worried it's just going to increase the educational divide, between schools that potentially could afford to start buying these tests and those that can't. It's difficult to work out the right thing to do."

It comes after over 2,000 pupils and staff at three schools in Lewisham, Poole and Salisbury took part in a pilot of lateral flow antigen tests, which provide a result in 20 to 30 minutes.

The trial, designed by Public Health England's Porton Down research base and the University of Oxford, and carried out with the help of Army medics, took place between October 21 and 23, and the results are yet to be published.

According to the Army, the test sees a swab taken from the back of throat, which is then smeared on to a chemical test strip that indicates whether the person tested has Covid-19.

Sergeant Louise Arthur, a professional Army nurse from Colchester-based 16 Medical Regiment, said the test was a "really quick and simple process", with those tested "in and out within two minutes".



## News

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## NRT future 'not in doubt', Ofqual says

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

EXCLUSIVE

The exams regulator has restated its commitment to running a national reference test, despite delaying a decision over the test's future following "unexpected results".

Piloted in 2016, the tests in maths and English involve a sample of year 11 pupils each year to monitor, over time, how well cohorts are performing. The results act as a guide for increases or decreases in that cohort's GCSE grades.

The contract, run by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), ends after the 2022 cycle.

It was anticipated a new contractor would be procured earlier this year for a handover year before sole delivery in 2023.

However, minutes of an Ofqual board meeting in January, published last month, said: "Following unexpected results in 2019, it was thought prudent not to make any



decision about future test requirements until a further two more years of NRT and GCSE results have been obtained."

The 2019 NRT found an "unexpected" slump in attainment in English from "less enthusiastic" pupils. Although Ofqual said it believed "there could be a case to make a small downward adjustment to the [2019 GCSE] grade standards", which would result in slightly higher grade boundaries (meaning fewer pupils would have got a grade 4 or above), it said it had "always been clear that we would be cautious in using

this evidence".

The minutes added that if the "unexpected variation in results continued over the next two years, then at that point further discussion would be brought back to the board as to the way forward".

Following this year's NRT, which showed a "steady increase" in maths, Ofqual revised upwards its standardised grades for the subject.

Asked for an update, Ofqual clarified the future of the NRT "was not and is not in doubt. The decision we have needed to take has been about the timing of re-procurement."

The regulator said that postponing plans to procure a new contract would allow "greater certainty about our requirements for the test in future and to achieve better value".

The NFER will now run the 2023 and 2024 tests.

"We will make arrangements for procurement of a future provider after publication of the 2021 results," an Ofqual spokesperson said.

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# Settling Durand dispute 'will hit services for vulnerable'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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A London council has told of the “keenly felt human cost” of having to meet a seven-figure compensation demand over a school site row, saying services for “vulnerable children and adults” will take the hit.

Lambeth could be forced to pay out millions for leisure and accommodation facilities on the site of the former Durand Academy, in south London.

It follows Durand Education Trust, the school's sister charity, bringing a judicial review against the government's decision to order it to give up the land free.

The charity claims it is entitled to compensation for increasing the value of the site, despite any development being completed six years before it was set up.

In the Court of Appeal this week, Jonathan Auburn, representing Lambeth, pointed to the authority's “tightly stretched budgets” and said there could be an impact on its services for “vulnerable children and adults” if it had to pay.

“There will be a real and keenly felt human cost if Lambeth were to have to meet the demand of compensation.”

He also said Durand had suggested Lambeth “could pay compensation to it by reserves or increasing council tax or taking the mortgage over the land”, but said councils were prohibited by law to mortgage individual assets.

Durand Academy became Van Gogh primary school in 2018 after the government terminated its funding agreement. At that point the school land and buildings were handed to Van Gogh's sponsor, the Dunraven Educational Trust.

But Durand Education Trust (DET), a charity set up by the school's governors in 2010, kept hold of land occupied by a private leisure centre and accommodation, including the top floors of the school's main building.

The court heard that DET finally handed back the land and buildings on October 9, and struck a deal for its trading arm, London Horizons, to run the facilities for another 18 months.

But during this week's hearing, DET argued that it was due compensation for the “enhanced value” of the commercial land.



The trust claims the decision not to award compensation was disproportionate, and that there was no “fair procedure” in place to determine whether payment was due. It also argued the decision violated its right to peaceful enjoyment of property and its right not to be discriminated against.

DET has not said how much it is demanding, but *Schools Week* reported last month that it is thought to want about £3 million.

Jonathan Moffett, acting for the Department for Education, said the land and buildings were public assets. There was “no evidence that DET did anything that enhanced the value of the site, and there is no evidence that DET has been left out of pocket”.

He said the leisure facilities were built with the help of a £100,000 grant from the London Residuary Body, and said no investment had been made in the buildings since 2004.

But Andrew Sharland, acting for DET, said the assertion nothing was invested after 2010 “fails to have proper regard to the funds invested which were generated from the commercial exploitation of the leisure land alone”.

The court heard how Durand became a grant-maintained school in 1995, giving its governors control over the land. Parts of

the school building were converted into residential accommodation, and a freestanding accommodation block and leisure centre were later built on the site.

Governors incorporated London Horizons Ltd in 1997 to run the leisure facilities. Profits were then put back into the school.

In 1999, the school became a foundation school, and its governors formed a foundation trust. Durand Education Trust was formed in 2010 shortly before the school converted to an academy, at which point it took on the land and buildings.

Moffett said that for a few years after conversion, things “went as planned”, with DET funding improvements to school buildings and providing money to the Durand Academy Trust.

But funding “dried up” in 2015, shortly after the school's unusual governance structure came to light in a high-profile National Audit Office report and public accounts committee hearing.

Sharland insisted that DET had continued to invest in the school, in particular its satellite boarding site St Cuthman's in West Sussex, which has since been sold.

He urged judges to quash the government's direction, and said the DfE should publish guidance “setting out a fair procedure for the assessment of compensation”.

“It promised to do this over a decade ago, so it only has itself to blame that there is no such guidance.”

A judgment is expected in the coming weeks.

# Trusts to face tougher financial checks

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

Academy trusts can expect tougher checks on their finances as auditors sharpen up following high-profile auditing scandals – and cash-strapped chains can no longer rely on government bail-outs.

Government guidance published last week said trustees and finance staff would face “more detailed questioning” from auditors assessing whether their trusts have enough cash to continue.

The independent regulator for auditors, the Financial Reporting Council, has revised its “going concern” accountancy standard following a string of high-profile cases in which auditors were alleged to have failed to warn that companies were on the brink of collapse.

They include the construction company Carillion, outsourcing group Interserve and Patisserie Valerie, the cake and cafe chain.

Phil Reynolds, a senior manager at Kreston Reeves chartered accountants, said schools would be “really challenged” on their financial assumptions and cashflow forecasts to make sure they “stack up” and were based on “good quality information”.

The guidance says this meant “controls and information used to make a going concern assessment at the academy trust will need to be improved, that academy trusts will need to provide greater granularity in their going concern assessments, and that academy trusts document their assessment of going concern more thoroughly than they do at the moment”.

The term “going concern” is a view as to whether an entity will have enough funds to pay its obligations – such as payroll and trade creditors – over at least the next 12 months.

About 200 academy trusts had “emphasis of matter” opinions from auditors, highlighting financial concerns, in their 2018-19 annual accounts.

However, statistics published by the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) show roughly 120 of these related to a trust closing.

Separate figures show 168 trusts were in cumulative deficit in August 2019 (6.1 per cent), compared with 195 (6.4 per cent) in August 2018.



Phil Reynolds



The guidance says a judgment of being unable to operate as a going concern was a “very serious matter” and could lead to ESFA intervention. Government support was “not guaranteed”.

Trusts “assessed not to have a sustainable financial future” were likely to get a warning notice that their schools would be closed or rebrokered to a “financially viable academy trust – a complex and sustained process”.

Micon Metcalfe, the chief finance officer at the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust, said: “The ESFA is essentially saying two things: we’re not going to guarantee bailing you out anymore. And if you don’t run your academy trust sustainably, then it’s possible we’ll take action. It’s also a warning to auditors that they have to do a thorough job.”

At least six trusts given financial warning notices since June have been told their case may be referred to the Charity Commission or Insolvency Service for “further investigation” should non-compliance with funding rules continue.

The Department for Education signed an agreement last year to regularly share information about academy trusts with the Insolvency Service, making it easier to ban trustees who flout the rules.

But a spokesperson for the service said there has been no disclosures to date. The Charity Commission did not respond.

The ESFA has also started applying

“qualifying floating charges” on trusts in trouble – a charge that “hovers” over the trust’s assets, meaning the agency is first in line to claw its cash back in the case of insolvency.

Schools Week reported last year that the government put a charge on £110,000 deficit funding it had lent the Hinckley Academy and John Cleveland Sixth Form Centre in Leicester.

Early intervention was the “best step” to avoid finance problems, the guidance says. Sometimes difficult decisions must be made that had longer-term implications, for example, restructures and the postponement of capital plans.

Financial forecasts, preferably covering the next five years, should also be scrutinised. Trustees needed to “understand the numbers” and should not be “taken unawares by being involved in difficult conversations with auditors regarding going concern during the audit process”, the guidance adds.

“Trustees should not remain passive and should satisfy themselves that the information to support the assessment is sound and challenge it where necessary.”

Reynolds said it would be useful if trustees presented a paper to auditors setting out “why they believe the trust will remain as a going concern for the period of at least 12 months from the date of the financial statements being signed”.

The Department for Education was approached for comment.



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# One in five schools shun mental health scheme

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

EXCLUSIVE

One in five secondary schools did not take part in a flagship government-funded scheme to train staff as mental health first-aiders.

In 2017, Theresa May launched an initiative to offer mental health awareness training to every secondary school over the next three years to "make a real difference to children's lives".

It made up part of a key manifesto promise to improve mental health support.

But when the scheme ended in March this year, just 2,710 of the 3,456 state secondary schools in England had completed the training.

The £200,000 a year scheme was initially overseen by Mental Health First Aid England. At the time it said it was building on a commitment from the prime minister to provide training to "at least one member of staff in every state secondary school in the country over the next three years."

The social enterprise delivered the programme for two years, with the final year overseen by the Anna Freud Centre.

A total of 4,178 teachers took part, but the scheme fell 746 schools short.

However, a spokesperson for the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) said it had been a success as the commitment was to "make mental health awareness training available to all state-funded secondary schools".

It said it was unable to confirm if a member of staff in every secondary school had received the non-compulsory training, but it had been offered to every school.

Some schools who did not take part may have got mental health awareness training elsewhere.

Margaret Mulholland, the SEND and inclusion specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said while the programme was "helpful", it did not make up for the "damage done to schools and colleges by years of government underfunding, which has affected their capacity to provide pastoral support to pupils.



"What is most needed is sufficient funding to be delivered directly to schools and colleges to enable them to access the appropriate training and support. This is important at any time, but particularly in the wake of the Covid pandemic and the detrimental impact this has undoubtedly had on some young people, and particularly those who are already vulnerable."

The scheme gave secondary school staff practical advice on dealing with issues such as depression and anxiety, suicide and psychosis, self-harm and eating disorders.

A press release from Downing St at the time said: "It is hoped that this will mean more young people will get fast and appropriate support for emerging mental health problems."

Tom Madders, the campaigns director at Young Minds, said the pandemic had had a "huge impact on children and young people's mental health".

In a recent report from the charity on Covid's impact on young people with mental health needs, 23 per cent of respondents said there was less mental health support in their school than before the pandemic. Meanwhile, 61 per cent said the return to school had a negative effect on their mental health.

Madders warned this fall in support was due to "financial pressure or concerns

about providing face-to-face support on-site". He was concerned that 20 per cent of state secondary schools had not opted to take part in the government-backed scheme as "school is about much more than education".

The government "must ensure that schools have increased funding this academic year so that they can support more young people with their mental health".

The DHSC spokesperson said: "Ensuring staff in schools have the tools and guidance needed to provide support to pupils who may be struggling with mental health problems is incredibly important, especially at this challenging time.

"NHS mental health services have adapted to continue to provide support throughout the pandemic, including by using digital appointments, and an extra £2.3 billion of investment will enable two million more people able to access these services by 2024."

Last year the Department for Education announced a £9.3 million scheme in which every school, college and alternative provision provider will receive mental health training alongside NHS specialists over four years. One hundred and twenty four mental health support teams will also be created across the country.

## News

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## Mock exams 'compound' disadvantage

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Using mocks as a "back-up" if next year's exams are disrupted could disadvantage poorer pupils even more, a social mobility expert has warned.

Teachers' assessments could be a better system, Sammy Wright, a commissioner at the Social Mobility Commission, told Tuesday's meeting of the education select committee.

Earlier this month, *The Guardian* reported that mock exams could be part of the government's "plan B" should pupils miss A-level and GCSE exams next year.

Ministers said this week exams would go ahead in 2021, but they were considering contingency measures in case of any further disruption.

Wright said using mock exams in January as a "back-up" would "compound" disadvantage as pupils would have not had the time to catch-up.

He was answering a question from the committee on the impact of Covid-19 on areas with high proportions of disadvantaged white pupils.



"What we need to do is trust the teacher assessment system, we need to ask teachers to base it on mocks, but they need to give a centre assessed grade that is a judgment and that judgment then needs to be moderated effectively". This could be "statistically adjusted if need be – but done so in a way that is actually thought out beforehand and planned carefully."

The government has maintained that exams are "the fairest and most accurate way to measure a pupil's attainment". This year it pushed A-levels and GCSEs back three weeks.

Before the national lockdown was announced, Nick Gibb, the schools minister, suggested that some grade inflation would be allowed again next year to allow for learning loss.

But Henri Murison, the director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, said an "organised and ruly" version of teacher assessment might need to be considered as pupils in the worst-affected Covid regions were much more likely to have missed more schooling.

"We want a rigorous system, but we also want fairness," Murison said. "We want kids in the north to do better. What we don't want is, systematically, them getting worse results by no fault of their own." He said a disadvantage gap coupled with "unfair" assessment was "a chronic issue for us".

"It means lots of kids will get thrown on an educational scrapheap that they shouldn't have been put on."

He said it was "clear" the disadvantage gap had already grown and that the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) – a government scheme to provide catch-up for pupils – would not solve the problem in its current form.

"We need to make sure the NTP has enough delivery capacity on the ground in the north of England."

The committee is investigating the educational underachievement of white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## Teachers CAN use one-off tests for MFL speaking

Teachers can use "one-off assessment opportunities" to test pupils' speaking skills in modern foreign language GCSEs next year, Ofqual has clarified.

The exams regulator has published its decisions following a consultation on changes to the way MFL GCSEs are to be assessed next year.

It is part of a suite of changes to GCSEs and A-levels aimed at making assessments safer.

Ofqual announced in August that GCSE spoken language assessments would be on a three-point scale (pass, merit, distinction) and would be assessed by teachers during the course of study.

The regulator then consulted on how the system would work, publishing its decisions yesterday.

It said it had amended the regulations to make it clear exam boards could allow teachers to conduct spoken assessments through "specific one-off assessment opportunities", as well as as part of the

"ongoing classroom process".

The regulations originally stipulated that spoken language assessment "should take place during normal teaching and learning rather than during a one-off performance".

However, respondents to the consultation warned this was unclear as to whether the test could take place only during classroom activities. There were also concerns about social distancing, which could limit speaking in classrooms.

Ofqual said it was "not our intention that the proposed requirements would restrict the circumstances in which teachers could assess spoken language".

"We have decided to amend the requirements to make it clear that awarding organisations may permit teachers to conduct spoken language assessments either as part of an ongoing classroom process or through specific one-off assessment opportunities."

The regulator said it had also made "some minor changes" to the pass, merit and

distinction grade criteria to "improve the clarity of the requirement".

It has also clarified that teachers could devise their own tasks to test spoken language, use tasks from previous years or use those designed by "others in the teaching community".

This comes after some consultation respondents said they were unsure if "specific tasks" needed to be set to cover the requirements of the three grades.

The regulator also confirmed schools would not need to record and retain evidence of pupils' performance as this would be "impractical, would undermine the flexibility we intended to allow, and would be burdensome for centres and learners".

Schools could share with learners their "working at" level. Some teachers queried whether this would be possible given the requirement this year to keep centre assessed grades confidential until the final results day.



## EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## The times are changing – but is it enough to satisfy the sector?

Two developments this week seem to show those in power are listening to the sector. Ofqual has signalled it wants to allow grade inflation again this year, something suggested by unions as a way to ensure pupils taking their exams next year aren't disadvantaged.

Meanwhile, it looks like Ofsted is willing to compromise intentions to bring back full inspections in January. Ministers are currently considering proposals that would include inspections, but without any grades.

This could pave the way for ministers to claim they are listening to the sector, but also keep parents happy that checks are still in place.

But is that enough?

It's likely not for many. We're increasingly hearing that school leaders are operating in survival mode, trying to get through each week, or even each day.

Throwing an impending Ofsted into the mix could be one ask too many. As Laura McNerney

points out this week, statistics show that all the hard-fought gains on reducing workload over the past few years have been wiped – with the amount of time spent on marking and planning back at 2018 levels.

Meanwhile, the covid disruption is no doubt stealing ever more precious time away from school staff focusing on making up the lost lockdown learning. And as Luke Sibbets explains, schools closures or not, a second wave of lost learning is already upon us. Tweaking next year's exams might not feel like enough.

There are shoots of optimism surfacing, though. The potential for quick turnaround tests is promising, and there seems to be progress on vaccines.

But, for good measure, make sure to read Sarah Mullin's five tips to keep you going until Christmas. As she says, it's been a punishing year, but schools need to keep strong as winter takes hold.



SCHOOLS WEEK



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## Fewer than one in five teachers supports calls for full school lockdowns

**Lynn Tate**

The risks aren't equal across the country. I completely understand colleagues that are in tier 3 areas wanting schools to close, especially if they are in the vulnerable categories themselves. Should students in a tier 1 area lose their access to schools because it may not be safe for tier 3 students to attend theirs?

### Do maths schools have proof of concept yet?

**Parves Khan**

I thought this was a good piece of journalism until I came across the sentence: "Kerry Burnham, the head of Exeter, who defies all stereotypes of maths geeks in a feminine, floral dress, explains the rationale for such tiny provision..."

I'm appalled by this description. First, why associate interest in maths as "geeky"? A caricature like this is one of the reasons students don't go on to do maths/further maths – we aren't going to get rid of these stereotypes if they are constantly reinforced in the media. Second, what on earth has her appearance got to do with her role? Why even make this a point of observation? It's irrelevant.

I am sure the writer did not intend to cause offence – but it's important we acknowledge how the language we use, often very subtle, often part of "unconscious" biases, perpetuates negative stereotypes of women and academia.

### Unlike government, education can talk its way out of a crisis

**Sally Harper**

So true. I think the figure of 55 per cent of teachers believing oracy contributes significantly to health and wellbeing would be higher if teacher training hadn't lost the value that was placed on dialogic education pre-2014 new national curriculum.

### Investigation: Minister intervenes as home education soars

**Dr Richard House**

Notice the panicking mainstream – Ofsted's Amanda Spielman

## REPLY OF THE WEEK

**Andy Paul, Facebook**

## Fewer than one in five teachers supports calls for full school lockdowns

Unions should be going after those laptops the government promised the underprivileged. Schools won't close unless it's essential. We need to be prepared if that does happen.

Unions shouldn't be fighting to make it happen, they should focus on what is most beneficial to pupils. Most teachers would agree with this.



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

blames the explosion of home-schooling on "misinformation on social media"; a union leader is "greatly concerned"; and a school head claims that the explosion in home-schooling is "absolutely due to Covid".

Notice also the common factor – viz. that they all have vested interest in the status quo that is institutionalised mainstream schooling. Nowhere in the report do we see the more plausible explanation for this dramatic trend – that is, that through lockdown, perhaps for the first time, many parents and families have had the opportunity directly to compare home-based learning versus institutional schooling, and their respective impact on family life and their children's learning experience and well-being. They've thus been woken up to the joys and freedoms of the former, and the many costs of the latter. Just read Anna Dussseau's new book on home-schooling (Hawthorn Press) to read chapter-and-verse on home-schooling and its many family-friendly advantages.

Of course many families will not be in any position to consider home-schooling. But for those that do have this flexibility and possibility, the longer the pandemic continues, the more they will discover the many benefits that it can confer. And as this process unfolds, just watch the moves of a panicking establishment (politicians, Ofsted, etc), wedded to an audit culture factory-farming schooling system, doing all they can to discourage parents and families from choosing this liberating option.

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# Profile

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR\_93



## ‘Music and art has the power to transform schools and communities’

**Twelve months into the job of CEO at The Active Learning Trust (ALT), Stephen Chamberlain reviews a year that has been more tumultuous than anyone could have expected.**

Stephen Chamberlain has always enjoyed a challenge. But, as we have all collectively learned, there is a stark difference between the challenges of old and the challenges of a global pandemic that seems to produce daily conundrums each more testing than the last.

Chamberlain took the helm as chief executive of The Active Learning Trust (ALT) in November last year.

The first year in any new job can be daunting at the best of times, but within 12 months of taking the role he has navigated nationwide school

closures, school reopenings, government flip-flopping on free school meals, the move to online learning, shortages of laptops for vulnerable pupils, national lockdowns, local lockdowns and one of the most controversial exam series in history.

This also came on top of the, thankfully, incredibly rare circumstances of taking on a trust in the wake of tragedy: its popular leader, Gary Peile, who had served as CEO since 2015, passed away in February 2019 aged 63 following a long battle with cancer.

It is surprising then when we chat to find Chamberlain is so upbeat, an eternal optimist determined to find solutions to the constant obstacles thrown his way.

“We forget the list of challenges the sector has been having to face as there have been so many,” he explained, “we just resolve it and move on to the next issue.”

Chamberlain grew up in Tottenham, attending an inner London comprehensive during the 1970s in what he calls “quite a challenging time”.

It was during this period he learned a valuable

# Profile: Stephen Chamberlain



A teenage Chamberlain

lesson that continues to shape his approach to education.

Aged eight he picked up the cello for the first time and a lifelong love affair with music began.

By 11 he had joined a junior orchestra in Haringey and by 16 had earned a Grade 8 with distinction from the Royal Schools of Music.

He went on to play across the UK and Europe with semi-professional orchestras, performing at outdoor evening concerts in Barcelona and in major concert halls in Prague and Budapest.

Chamberlain discovered that music and the arts have the power to be “transformational”.

He explains music allowed him, the son of a builder and local office worker, to play in orchestras with people “from all walks of life” and became “quite a leveller”.

He added: “Music and art has the power to transform schools and communities.

“It was music which got me through school. When education was difficult, music was the thing that made a difference. When I came into teaching I always looked for jobs where I could make a difference, either in the classroom or wider community.

“CEO seems to be the role where I can have the biggest impact on the largest number of children.”

Starting his career as, you guessed it, a music teacher in 1987, Chamberlain saw this impact in action first hand and since becoming a headteacher in 2005 he has made the arts a key feature of his leadership.



Playing the cello

## “CEO seems to be the role where I can have the biggest impact”

In 2009 he joined Academies Enterprise Trust as regional director of education for the east of England and became founding principal of the Clacton Coastal Academy.

Many of the academy’s pupils resided in nearby Jaywick still one of the most deprived areas in England and “at the time one of the most deprived wards in Europe”.

Chamberlain explained he was keen to “provide a strategy for all those young people who were experiencing poverty” and ensure their experience of school was “enriched” beyond the usual mainstream curriculum.

For example, engagement with extra-

curricular activities after school was extremely low as pupils were unable to get home without the aid of school transport.

To make sure pupils did not miss out, Chamberlain introduced an “elective period” during the school day in which pupils could immerse themselves in arts and music.

The strategy worked and between 2011 and 2014, during which time he switched to an executive principal role, the academy progressed from ‘Satisfactory’ and ‘Requires Improvement’ to being rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted.

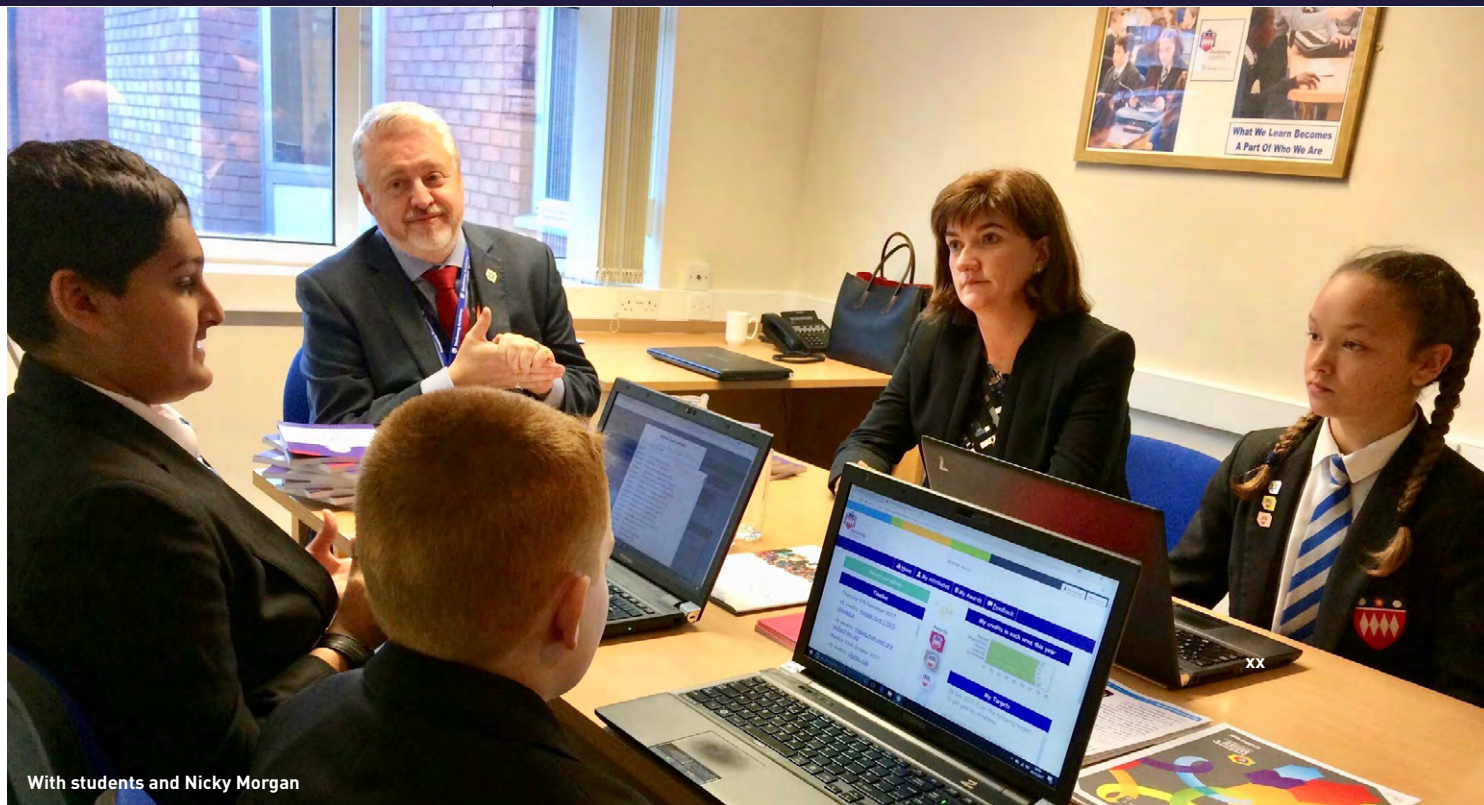
The schools watchdog even highlighted Chamberlain as the academy’s “key strength”, whose “leadership and vision...raised the expectations of staff and the aspirations of students”.

A role as CEO at the Challenger Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT) followed in 2015, with Chamberlain continuing to focus on character education and broadening the curriculum outside the classroom.

The trust leader spoke of his belief the sector needs to “revalue a broader curriculum across the arts” as the “more things pupils take on



# Profile: Stephen Chamberlain



With students and Nicky Morgan

outside mainstream curriculum the richer their lives will be”.

Then last November, Chamberlain made the leap from the eight academies of CMAT to the 21 at ALT.

At the time ALT was at something of a crossroads.

Just nine months earlier Peile had passed away – the loss cast a long shadow over the trust and led to schools suffering from “gaps in the continuity of strategy”.

Kingsfield Primary School saw its Ofsted rating drop from ‘Requires Improvement’ to ‘Inadequate’, with Chamberlain stating problems at the school and its revolving door of leadership were not “at the forefront of the trust’s mind” in the wake of the tragedy.

However, work to “drive standards” soon began, with the trust working to support leaders at its most challenging schools and engage in forensic deep dives into problems.

Chamberlain describes his predecessor as “a very talented man” who always put the trust’s pupils first and admitted “they were big shoes to fill”.

“Gary had been very successful and the trust had been very successful and I’m always mindful of building on that legacy. We stand on the shoulders of giants in many ways”, he added.

But just four months after taking the role the

coronavirus pandemic hit the UK – changing what it meant to be a school leader.

“There’s no training for CEOs that prepares you for this one. Normally in this kind of role you are

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**“We stand on the shoulders of giants in many ways”**

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more focused on the long-term strategy. This [the pandemic] obviously changes the work we are doing.”

Chamberlain said the sudden change of circumstance was initially testing but the “ultimate test of leadership” is how you deal with a crisis.

“I see being a CEO as more of a service role, I’m there to serve the heads and make sure they can do their job.

“If the heads feel I’ve got their backs then at this time that’s the best kind of leadership I can offer.

The CEO is quick to shift any praise on to the teachers and pupils within the trust who he says have gone above and beyond at every turn.

Ever the optimist, he is also eager to highlight some of the positives that have been born out of the disruption, highlighting how the sector came together and collaborated outside normal structures to solve problems.

He added: “I wouldn’t wish a pandemic on anyone but the impact can be used as a positive to drive things forward at pace.

“It has allowed us to look at our systems and processes in much more depth than we would have in normal circumstances and it has allowed us to make changes that will actually be sustainable and have an impact in the future.

“Even though this crisis is still continuing, you still have to have an eye on where the organisation is going and continue to develop.”

Prior to the pandemic a key area of focus for the trust was the retention and growth of staff through professional development.

Since the disruption began this development, much like the trust’s curriculum, has moved online, allowing easier access and engagement for busy staff who were previously forced to travel long distances to receive the training.

Chamberlain added: “There’s a sense that the heads think it is their trust — theirs and the communities’ and the children’s.

“As the CEO, it is not my trust. I am just the custodian, it existed before me and it will exist after me.”



# Opinion

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



TONY BLAIR

Founder, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

## Schools must stay open and here's how to do achieve it

**The former prime minister reveals a long-term strategy that he says will build confidence to keep schools open**

Covid-19 has already deprived 300 million children of their education worldwide. We cannot let this happen again and must do everything in our power to keep schools open throughout and beyond this second lockdown. It is essential that parents and staff have confidence in measures to keep schools open, not least because low attendance will disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged young people.

To get this right requires a long-term, clear strategy that restores confidence and addresses the legitimate concerns of teachers, parents and pupils while introducing new measures to curtail outbreaks in schools.

Such a strategy was set out this week in my institute's paper, *Light at the End of the Tunnel*. It brings together four distinct pillars: testing, therapeutics, vaccines and data. For each, ministers must work with experts throughout November to build infrastructure and speed up the safe introduction of new

technologies.

Mass testing must be available to every school that needs it. Weekly testing of a school's population will identify asymptomatic carriers – especially prevalent amongst children and young adults – and localised tracing capability will

**“Rapid, on-the-spot tests must be rolled out now**

allow us to track infections back to their source. This necessitates the introduction of new, rapid, on-the-spot tests that are easy to administer. We know they work, we know they're available: they must be rolled out now.

There are lessons from elsewhere too. The University of Illinois has led the way in education-based testing by repurposing large trailers to conduct 10,000 tests a day on campus, using readily available equipment and student-friendly saliva tests. We could and should produce a significant number of our own testing trucks, deploying them to schools. Over time, a network of mobile testing labs could service the entire education sector.

At the same time, we must do



everything possible to safely speed up the introduction of promising drugs that will save lives, and the vaccines that will reduce the impact of infection on our teachers and those most at risk from Covid.

Safety cannot be compromised. This is not to say that the processes

to confirm safety can't be sped up, but simply that no drug or vaccine – no matter how promising it might be – should leave the door without being certified as 100 per cent safe. As our paper sets out, hundreds of thousands of people around the world have participated in more than 50 trials and there have been no reported serious side-effects.

Therapeutic drug trials should be extended to every eligible patient, rather than the 10 per cent who are currently participating, and our question shouldn't be “how well” a drug works but “if” it works at all. As soon as a therapeutic drug is deemed safe, it should be offered to patients most at risk.

When a vaccine reaches a minimum level of “efficacy”, this should trigger its approval. Even 50

per cent efficacy – meaning that it will reduce the severity of infection by half – will save lives. For those who would only ever get a mild infection or no symptoms at all, such as younger adults, it's likely they may not be infectious at all.

A safe and effective vaccine should be distributed to NHS and care home workers in December, quickly followed by teachers and those most at risk from Covid. This would secure our hospitals and protect schools in the difficult winter months ahead.

High-quality data is just as important as the three other pillars. A system that connects the tests we take, the vaccines we receive and the drugs we're given is vital if we're to continue building our understanding of how and where the virus is spreading and how to treat it.

This strategy would massively benefit teachers, protecting their health while giving them the confidence to keep doing what they do best – teach. It would mark the biggest peacetime operation in our country's history but it's worth it for the reward. Hope. Hope that our education remains open and protected. Hope that we can beat back Covid-19. Hope that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

# Opinion

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

**The latest data shows the most disadvantaged pupils were more likely to have missed the most school this term, writes Luke Sibieta**

Passionate views have been put forward over the past few days about whether schools should remain open, and it is almost certain that arguments will only intensify as the national lockdown comes into effect today. For the time being at least, schools are required to, and given the extent of lost learning that has already taken place this year, this is the right thing to do – as long as government and schools are confident the right safety precautions are in place.

But regardless of what transpires in the bumpy weeks ahead, it's important to appreciate just how many pupils are already out of the classroom. Recent research from the Education Policy Institute, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, found that in England just before half-term, just 87 per cent of pupils were attending school. In other words, since schools reopened in September, hundreds of thousands of pupils have already missed school because of the re-emergence of the pandemic.

The latest attendance data relate to the week before half-term and we won't get the newest figures until next week, but there's a strong possibility that rates could plunge even further, with school attendance rates likely to be in lockstep with the virus as it continues to proliferate.

Worse, the headline figure also



LUKE  
SIBIETA

Research fellow,  
Education Policy Institute

## School closures or not, a second wave of lost learning is already upon us

masks a huge amount of variation that presents policy makers with substantial challenges. Worrying divides are apparent between age groups, socioeconomic groups and

and there is emerging evidence in other parts of the UK of the same link.

This is a big concern. We don't know what will happen with schools

“The government must do better on targeting learning resources”

different parts of the country.

We can see that older age groups are more likely to be absent from school. We can also see that in areas that have been most severely affected by the pandemic, such as Knowsley, on Merseyside, only 61 per cent of secondary pupils were able to attend. In sharp contrast, attendance was as high as 94 per cent in Kensington and Chelsea.

However, what sticks out most from the latest data is that it's the most disadvantaged pupils who were more likely to have missed the most school this term. In Scotland, pupils living in areas of high deprivation are more likely to have low attendance levels,

over the next few weeks, but what is very clear is that among the large number of pupils who have already been absent this term, the poorest are disproportionately represented. And that's on top of the lost learning time from the first lockdown.

The evidence suggests that – school closures or not – periods of home learning are already a reality and that we urgently need to give extra support to the poorest pupils to cope with this second wave of lost learning.

This requires government to do better on allocating learning resources to the most disadvantaged, including through its wider catch-

up support. The £350 million National Tutoring Programme for schools is targeted at disadvantaged pupils, but the wider £650 million catch-up fund – which allocates the same amount of funding to a pupil in an affluent area as it does to a pupil in a poorer one – is badly targeted.

What's also notable in the data is how England compares to other UK nations. It has performed slightly better than Wales, where 85 per cent of pupils were in school, but has been far less successful than Scotland and Northern Ireland, which saw attendance rates of over 90 and 93 per cent respectively in October.

This suggests there is much to be learnt from Scotland and Northern Ireland's approach to attendance, and it will be interesting to see how the different parts of the UK diverge on their school policies; especially given the different paths taken on national coronavirus restrictions.

The only real certainty is that further uncertainty lies ahead for schools. As we step into another national lockdown, the government must do everything in its power to support them through the coming weeks and months – or risk seeing yet another wave of lost learning, and an even more unequal one at that.

# Opinion

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

**Policies, infrastructure, communication and trouble-shooting: these are the four crucial things to consider as online teaching becomes increasingly common, writes Charlotte Aynsley**

The Department for Education's (DfE) recent temporary continuity direction, which requires all schools to provide "immediate access to remote education" is likely to be interpreted in large part as a call for schools to provide learning online.

To enable this to happen effectively, it is essential that the appropriate safeguards are put in place. Doing this effectively relies on a whole-school approach and involves four interconnected considerations.

First among these are policies and practices. Many schools have yet to update these to reflect the new reality, yet students need clear guidelines to ensure virtual teaching reflects the high standards that they are still expected to adhere to.

Schools must consider their current codes of conduct, behaviour policies and acceptable-use policies and ensure that they address potential grey areas in the virtual classroom. For instance, students should appear with appropriate clothing and shouldn't use their phone during a virtual lesson. Student-teacher interactions should only take place within the hours that the school building would ordinarily be open, unless there are pre-arranged sessions approved by members of the senior leadership team (SLT), students and their parents, or carers.

Policies and procedures must also be updated to ensure teachers are up to date and using technology appropriately, including limiting



CHARLOTTE AYNsLEY

Safeguarding advisor,  
Impero Software

## What do schools need to know about safeguarding while teaching remotely?

interactions to school-approved accounts and platforms, and avoiding one-to-one interactions unless specifically approved. In addition, online lessons must adhere to existing practices around recording and logging, ensuring only relevant data is retained in accordance with data

whether teaching is online or in the classroom. That means moving beyond the filing cabinet or paper-based systems so incidents can effectively be prevented and managed. It's important that teachers can access the system from anywhere, at any time, to look at

**“A monitoring system must be in place for online classes’**

protection legislation.

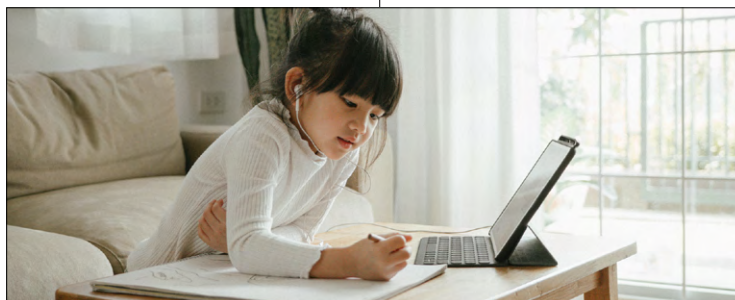
Second, a robust infrastructure is a fundamental prerequisite for effective safeguarding for remote teaching. It is vital that schools do not separate safeguarding between online and physical spaces. A modern safeguarding solution should include the capability to monitor interactions both online and offline to identify patterns in behaviour.

Schools should also easily be able to report concerns, regardless of

records and to log concerns.

Third is communication and support. It's important that all staff, students, parents and carers are informed about new ways of working and that this information comes from safeguarding or child protection leads. Having a single source of information ensures advice is consistent and means teachers and students know who to reach out to with questions and concerns.

Parents should be informed



of remote safeguarding arrangements too, and teachers must be updated and trained on the specifics of any new systems or policies.

Last, it's important that schools consider what they will do if something goes wrong and that teachers know how to report concerns. They should not, for example, attempt to intervene directly via one-to-one sessions unless previously approved by a member of the SLT – which takes us back to policies and procedures.

In the event that something inappropriate comes up during a remote or hybrid lesson, a teacher may need to end the session immediately for all students. In cases regarding potential illegal imagery, teachers must also collaborate with their safeguarding lead, who will then have to decide whether the imagery should be reported to, for example, the Internet Watch Foundation.

However we feel about moving lesson observations online, schools should have a regular monitoring system in place for online classes to ensure classroom integrity and everyone's safety. As now, if allegations are made against a teacher or student, the assigned safeguarding professional will need to conduct an investigation. Policies, procedures, systems, stakeholder buy-in and a clear action plan must be in place before that happens.

While new government requirements and an ongoing lack of clarity are frustrating, one certainty is that the need for online teaching will continue to exist for the foreseeable future. Ensuring it is safe is as important as ensuring it is effective.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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SARAH MULLIN

Deputy headteacher, Priory School, Birmingham

## Navigating Covid-19: five tips to get us to Christmas

**This has been a punishing year, and we need to keep strong as winter takes hold. Here are some excellent strategies, writes Sarah Mullin**

Each new half-term, it seems, is a half-term like no other. Since the summer, teachers have worked tirelessly in innovative ways, from covering the lessons of absent colleagues to teaching live classes while in isolation themselves. Staff have completed additional break duties, dealt with mask-related concerns and supported children with an increasing number of social, emotional and mental health issues, all while navigating these worrying times for themselves.

Sadly, this new half-term is likely to be another uniquely challenging one, given the second national lockdown. This time, the days are getting shorter and the weather wetter and colder and pubs are closed even for takeaways! The plan is for schools to remain fully open, but the frisson of a possible government U-turn will only add to the stresses.

Despite the innumerable challenges, there are some simple things school leaders can do to make sure everyone makes it

through to Christmas.

First, the educational landscape has changed significantly and this presents us with the possibility of critically reviewing our policies and procedures for workload reduction. Could the content of some meetings be shared by email? Is it time to embrace flexible working to retain loyal, dedicated and hard-working

teachers? Could working more collaboratively be more effective and more efficient?

Second, while the often-negative media narrative about teachers surely doesn't reflect the reality in our schools, we do have an unhealthy tendency to push too far the other way. Teachers are incredible, yes, but the truth is that we are not superheroes. Praise is always appreciated, but no amount of it will make us one either. We need to take care of ourselves so that we are best placed to help our learners.

Teaching from home during lockdown blurred some of the boundaries between work and home life; it is important to re-establish



routines so that we are able to physically and mentally separate our responsibilities. When we make those boundaries clear, we can spend the guilt-free time we need to enjoy the little things in life that put a smile on our face.

Third, never underestimate the power of a good night's sleep for

success being sustainable.

Gone are the days when we could reach out and offer a hug to our colleagues or pop to the pub at the end of an exhausting week; social distancing has put a stop to congregating in the staffroom and it is becoming increasingly unlikely that teachers will enjoy a staff social together in December. It is therefore essential that we show empathy for one another, acknowledging each other's concerns and recognising that each of us is responding in different ways to the challenges of the times we are living in.

Last, we must all recognise that self-care is not selfish. It is OK not to be OK at any time, but not least when educating during a global pandemic. Teachers give so much of themselves and often deal with feelings of guilt when they aren't at their best or are unable to attend. We must realise the importance of investing in their mental health and wellbeing and not allow ourselves to be tabloid-pressured into submission. There are excellent support systems for our profession – the charity Education Support and the free app Headspace For Educators are just two excellent examples we can signpost to our colleagues.

“ Kindness will be central to our success being sustainable’

positive physical and mental health. While the half-term break may have provided the time to catch up on some of the sleepless nights endured over the previous few weeks, it can't and shouldn't be expected to carry us to Christmas. Encouraging staff to rest can pay as many dividends as praising them. Establishing predictable routines will help much more than ensuring ready supplies of caffeine in staffrooms.

Fourth, praise and kindness may be related but they are not synonymous. Our most valuable resource is the skills and experiences of our staff, and it is finite. Relying on praise alone can lead us to use it irresponsibly, while kindness will be central to our

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## Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



## Powering Up Your School

**Author:** Guy Claxton, Jann Robinson, Rachel MacFarlane, Graham Powell, Gemma Goldenberg and Robert Cleary

**Publisher:** Crown House

**Reviewer:** Carly Waterman, headteacher, Lodge Park Academy, Corby, Northamptonshire

My school, Lodge Park Academy, is known affectionately as LPA, so I really wanted this book to be my blueprint for the future. How serendipitous would it be for LPA to adopt the Learning-Powered Approach to school improvement? But I'm afraid it's not to be.

Don't get me wrong: I want to "power up" my school. I really do. And I will take any help and guidance I can get, so I read this book with interest, an open mind and a willingness to learn. It's really a fieldbook of all the examples where the Learning Powered Approach (LPA) has been applied successfully in schools. It includes detailed case studies and examples from a range of schools across the world.

*Powering Up Your School* opens with a disclaimer that it's not for everyone, that it's unlike the shelffuls of other educational leadership books, and that unless you're a leader with a heartfelt sense of moral purpose, you ought not to waste your time and money. Are there any leaders who would say they don't have a heartfelt sense of moral purpose?

The LPA is pitched a "middle way" between the extremes of "traditional" and "progressive" teaching. I'm a notorious fence-sitter, so this appeals to me. Unfortunately, it seems to misrepresent traditionalism as primarily focused on grades/outcomes and to be unduly dismissive of knowledge-rich curricula. Neither will sit well with trads I know.

I don't really know why the authors

(there are a lot of them) don't just say outright that this book is firmly in the progressive camp. I would still read it, as would many others. When you're talking about "learning muscles" and asking me whether I'm a "water thinker" or a "rock thinker", it's pretty obvious which paradigm you're rooted in – and that's OK with me. Own it. Trying to be all things to all readers is just confusing, and weird.

And herein lies my issue with this book: it confuses me. It claims to be "a compendium of detailed advice" but it also says it's not a "recipe". It claims to be a "philosophy" but also a "set of frameworks" (so, like a recipe, then?). It tells me to think "garden" not "model aeroplane", but there are pages of grids, ladders, triangles, maps, diagrams and numbered lists.

Its central claim is that the LPA is a philosophy, but it's one that seems to me to be based on a lot of "truthiness". Its supposed scientific rationale adds up to a range of references to researchers from the same (progressive) school

of thought – Resnick, Dweck, Berger, Fullan, Duckworth.

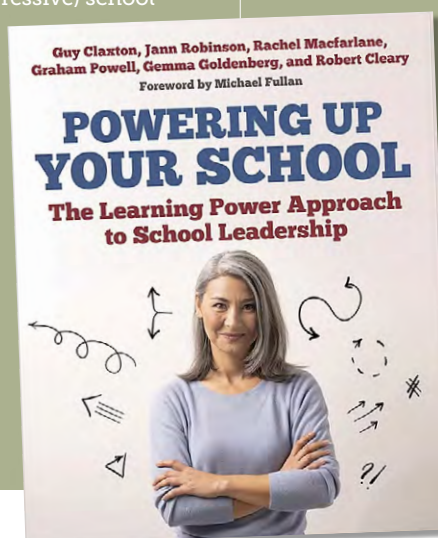
And is this a book about developing character and dispositions, independent learners or a school culture? Is this a book about

leadership or classroom practice? There is simply too much here to provide any clarity.

Looking past the fogginess of the message and the contortions involved in denying one's own bias, there was much about *Powering Up Your School* that I enjoyed. I'm partial to a bit of truthiness. I feel inspired by analogies, metaphors and allusions. And I do want to develop the young people in my school into resilient, questioning, compassionate adults with fulfilling and satisfying lives – of course I do.

So more than anything else, the case studies were a pure pleasure to read and really gave me a window into what other school leaders were doing to "power up" their schools. The experiences of leaders, teachers and students in these schools leapt off the page, and I also appreciated chapters on stakeholders, school culture, the language of learning, pedagogy, sustainability and measuring progress. There was much I disagreed with, but that doesn't mean I didn't come away enriched.

In the end though, *Powering Up Your School* made me feel foggy. A non-threatening and fairly enjoyable foggy feeling, but foggy nonetheless. After reading eight million DfE updates this year, I'm sure I won't be alone in wanting more clarity – and honesty.





# Reviews



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

@JMSREFLECT

**EEF Blog: How to use reading as a starting point for learning this year**  
@bilton\_caroline

Another great blog from the EEF team, this time from Caroline Bilton, explaining how Cragside Church of England Primary School is "putting reading at the heart of their approach to teaching and learning this year". As a secondary teacher, I often used to skip over primary education blogs, assuming they were not relevant to me. How wrong I was. Whatever your teaching phase, there are some excellent ideas in this piece, clearly explained: modelling inferencing through high-quality discussion and the motivational effect this has on children cannot be phase-specific. The link between talk and reading and strategies for building a love of reading are clearly explained and the use of reading to reconnect with children after lockdown is a great approach.

**Dig a Little Deeper**  
@BradResearchSch

Mark Miller of Bradford Research School has written a very useful piece here. It is easy for us teachers to overlook the importance

## TOP BLOGS of the week

of engaging with research critically and bringing our own expertise and knowledge of context into play. Simplistic strategies imported without thought are unlikely to improve the quality of learning, whether they come from a highly paid external Inset provider or the EEF. Miller explains some of the principles behind evaluating research, looking at the detail beneath meta-analyses and going "beyond the headlines" to find the nuances. The aim is not to disparage educational research but to empower teachers to make the most of it and, as such, it is a very helpful contribution.

**Masterpieces**  
@First\_Floor\_8

When recommending reading to colleagues it is easy to overlook subject-specific blogs for fear of appearing parochial or because their relevance tends to be equally specific. Even those that have wider appeal require more effort to appreciate from non-specialists. As a history teacher, therefore, I am particularly averse to recommending history blogs, but this one is worth an exception. Although the examples and curriculum issues on which Harriet Cornwell reflects may not be familiar to non-historians, the post offers an engaging and thought-provoking analysis of the process of curriculum development, adaptation and improvement. Early mistakes have been learned from and a clear intent has been developed in this history

department. Some of the issues faced, such as diversity, are considerations in many subjects. And even where the specifics do not apply beyond history, the journey and reflections on building a better curriculum, "the stepping back, the patient and careful perusal" are well worth sharing.

**What Makes a Great Teacher? The Value of Professional Development**  
@Cam\_Assessment

*The Great Teaching Toolkit: Evidence Review* released in June 2020 is a product of extensive research conducted by Professor Rob Coe and the team at Evidence Based Education. In my opinion it should be widely read within the profession. This blog takes the form of an interview with Professor Coe in which he shares some of his learning from the process, and it makes an engaging read. It sheds light both on the scale of the research conducted and also on some of the key conclusions, especially how important teachers' professional development can be. "When it's done well," says Coe, "it really does have a huge effect on educational improvement." If you've already read the toolkit, this may not add much, but if not, this makes a great introduction to that work, as well as linking to a great webinar on the toolkit itself.

**Leadership During a Pandemic**  
@MrMChatley

It is hard to think of a time when school leadership has ever been more important or more challenging. It is a very fair point that "never before have any of us had to deal with the complexities and ever-changing nature of a global pandemic". This piece offers eight key pieces of advice to leaders, learnt from the experience of the pandemic. But the lessons drawn, ranging from the importance of honest acknowledgement of mistakes to "keep the main thing the main thing", are of value to leaders at all levels and should resonate long after the current crisis is over.

# Research

TeacherTapp will review a research development each half term.  
Contact @TeacherTapp if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

## Technology has reduced workload and stress, right?

**Laura McInerney, Co-founder, Teacher Tapp**

**P**olicy makers keep asking an odd question. Every time they say it, I'm totally baffled.

"Why are teachers so stressed out?" they ask, "Surely they've got less to do now that technology has become so much more integrated into their daily working lives?"

I look for the sense of irony on their face. It's not there. The person continues.

"Now that schools are using online apps for homework, and have better parent communication systems, and so many of them aren't doing physical marking, it feels like things must be much easier for teachers, no?"

I sigh.

You know those moments where a child has done something completely ridiculous? Like, they've brought their goldfish to school in a Persil washing ball, or produced a George Foreman grill from their bag at lunchtime and are hunting for a plug so they can toast their sandwiches? There's that moment, just before you speak, when you can't believe that you're about to explain why something is inappropriate, and yet there you are having to do it.

"Erm...well...there's quite a lot going on in schools at the moment..."

"Yes, yes," says the concerned person, "all the social distancing, but that doesn't add to workload!"

"Except, it sort of does," I say. "Because, let's say you've previously planned all of this year's lessons to start with a textbook exercise. Only you can't now pass out textbooks. So that's got to change. And maybe your lessons were always 55 minutes before, and now they're 50 minutes because pupils need more time to change over in the corridors. It doesn't sound like a big adjustment but it



actually is. So more tweaks are needed.

"Then there's the fact that you can't rely on pupils having learned what you needed them to know in the previous year, the loss of coursework in some subjects, the changing around of exam syllabuses and the fact that all group- and most pair-work is now cancelled. Any lesson with those planned in needs changing too."

The policy maker gurns, "And homework?"

"You still have to log into your online system, make sure it's uploaded, and downloaded, or ticked off. There are often questions from pupils, passwords that need to be reset, and so on. If you're in a school with whizzy computers this can be quick, but if you're chugging along on old systems, or in a school with limited access to a computer room and no laptops, that's just added time too."

"Right, got it," says the eduwonk. "So, not that great after all?"

"We haven't even got into the difficulties of trying to write a lesson so that it can also be done remotely on a computer, or without one, given that teachers can't rely on every pupil being in school, or having a device or internet when they

aren't in school."

If all of this seems pessimistic and anecdotal, it's backed up by our latest Teacher Tapp data. In the past few years, our surveys had shown a gradual decrease in the amount of time teachers spent on planning and marking. Marking went first, and then, as schools redid their curriculum around the new Ofsted framework, time on planning went up, but then back down.

Unfortunately, in the past half-term, the amount of time on marking and planning has shot back to 2018 levels. And, oddly, it doesn't seem to correlate with whether or not a school has moved to online homework or lesson systems because in truth, each has their own associated workload.

This isn't to say that technology hasn't helped in some places. Teachers have said they are now using things such as voice recordings rather than physical marking for homework, and many do find it easier to keep track of digital homework rather than paper-based. But in terms of workload, in the last week before half-term, more than 40 per cent of teachers recorded working more than 50 hours and one in three headteachers worked more than 60.

Tech is not saving us all just yet. There is a long way to go.



# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## MONDAY:

After Boris Johnson outlined his plans to put the country in Lockdown Two, schools minister Nick Gibb tweeted it was "vital that we keep our schools open to protect the education and wellbeing of this country's children". All well and good.

To accompany the tweet he posted a link to a statement made by the UK's chief medical officers outlining their views that (in short) it was safe for pupils to be in school. What wasn't as clear, though, was that the statement from the CMOs was made on August 21 when there were roughly 1,000 new coronavirus cases a day (we're now on about 20,000 and rising).

## TUESDAY:

It's not just the country's poorest pupils who are deserving of free school meals, it seems, but also senior trade union staff earning near six-figure salaries. The National Education Union is recruiting for a deputy general secretary on £86,970 – plus £1,035 annual lunch allowance. Ignoring that the union already has two general secretaries (earning a combined £225,000-plus), there have been questions why someone on such a salary needs another £4 a day for lunch. And we've been led to believe it was the academy trust CEOs who were the fat cats!

## WEDNESDAY:

While we're on the topic of free school meals, it's good to see the prime minister keeping up his rocky

relationship with the truth and congratulating his government for introducing free school meals for five, six and seven-year-olds in 2014. It was the coalition government that introduced what was a Liberal Democrat policy (former LibDem leader Nick Clegg said the £600 million-a-year scheme was the "price he demanded" to support the Conservative party's marriage tax allowance).

But there is one thing that can be attributed to the Conservatives: their attempt in 2017 to scrap universal infant free school meals and replace them with free breakfasts (funded at just 7p each, no less). The plan, in the party's election manifesto, was soon abandoned.

The Department for Education has been copping a lot of flak for its response to the pandemic – but at least it's consistent. Awaiting guidance on how they should operate during the national lockdown (announced at the weekend), schools had to wait until just a few hours before it kicked off to find out the new rules.

The last-minute guidance, published as schools were finishing for the day, follows the bat-shit crazy proposal to allow pupils to appeal their grades earlier this year based on a mock exam, an edict issued just two days before they were due to collect results.

More recently, heads were left

apoplectic after the DfE's new four-tier framework of restrictions to help control the virus was published at 7pm on Friday, August 28, with many schools due to welcome back pupils for the new academic year from the following Monday.

PS: You would think the four tiers would kick into action during a national lockdown, right? Wrong. The DfE's four-tier system has been suspended, and will be picked up again after the national lockdown.

## THURSDAY:

It looks like Ofqual has learned its lesson. The regulator got a rude awakening after choosing to mostly keep schtum over what was going on about this summer's exams, leaving the details between itself and ministers. However, following the fiasco and ensuing uproar, education secretary Gavin Williamson quickly exploited the void, filling it with his own (skewed) version of events that heaped the blame on Ofqual and led to chief regulator Sally Collier getting the boot.

But new interim chief regulator Dame Glenys Stacey is making it clear she won't fall into such a trap. In a letter to ministers, published today, she makes it clear that she backs giving kids more generous grades next year to make up for their disrupted schooling. Should ministers decide against this, we'll all at least know beforehand who was responsible.



## Headteacher posts at two Trust schools in Dudley, West Midlands.



### Hob Green Primary School ●●● The Bromley Pensnett Primary School

**Organisation type:** Academy Trust  
**Contract:** Permanent/Full time  
**Salary description:** Leadership Group Pay Scale: L15 to L21 subject to experience and negotiation

**Closing date:** 27 November 2020

**Visit to schools and Trust:** Due to Covid-19 restrictions this will not be possible.

**Interview dates:** 7 and 8 December 2020

**Taking up post:** Easter 2021 or September 2021 for the right candidate.

#### Trust Headteacher

drb Ignite Academy Trust, Birmingham (nine primary schools in Birmingham and Dudley, West Midlands)

These are exciting times for our Trust. We are developing a committed team of talented staff, supportive parents and a strong board of trustees. We require exceptional school leaders to lead improvement in two of our Dudley schools and to play an influential role in wider Trust developments.

#### We need leaders with:

- a deep commitment to and knowledge of the education and well-being needs of all pupils.
- a clear vision for a dynamic, engaging and inclusive primary curriculum.
- extensive experience of EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

- a proven track record of successful leadership, delivering results and improving outcomes.
- a commitment to working collaboratively.
- the ability to inspire staff and pupils and champion success for all.

You will be supported by a strong central school improvement team and dedicated group of fellow headteachers who work together through a culture of collaborative effort and trust.

#### We can offer you:

- a dynamic professional development experience.
- opportunity to make a major contribution to the development of a growing and ambitious organisation.
- a values-led culture that underpins the attitudes and behaviour of all involved with the Trust.

**Download application form and Information Pack:** [www.drbignitemat.org](http://www.drbignitemat.org)  
**Return completed application form to:** [rhawkins@drbignitemat.org](mailto:rhawkins@drbignitemat.org)

**Closing date:** 27 November 2020

**Contact details:** drb Ignite Academy Trust

**Telephone number:** 0121 231 7131

**Contact:** James Hill – Trust Executive Director of School Improvement



#### HEADTEACHER

Full Time, Permanent

**Pay Scale:** Leadership ISR (Group 3)

**Points:** Headteacher: L16-22

Are you a Headteacher looking for a new challenge or an ambitious Deputy/Head of School ready to take the next step?

#### The Trust is looking to recruit someone who:

- › has recent, successful experience at Headteacher level or is looking for an opportunity to take the next step in their leadership career
- › shows a commitment to excellence in teaching and learning
- › has the skills to lead, improve and sustain academic achievement for all pupils
- › is willing to embrace and develop the Christian ethos of our school
- › is an excellent communicator and able to build effective partnerships with families, staff, governors and the wider community
- › has a flexible approach to working
- › is driven, ambitious and enthusiastic.

#### VACANCY

**Deadline for Applications:**

13<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 12:00pm

**Interview Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Start Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021

See the school website listing for more information



Timbertree Academy is part of United Learning, a national group of academies and independent schools. Its a happy, lively, forward thinking school that secures good outcomes for its pupils by offering the very best education, care and services to its children and families.

Our developing West Midlands cluster comprises Timbertree, Corngreaves and Ham Dingle Primary Schools, with all three being led by an Executive Headteacher.

An excellent opportunity for a leader looking to combine the running of

their own school with the benefit of working closely with an Executive Headteacher as well as within a developing cluster enabling high quality, bespoke school improvement and wider opportunities for both staff and students to work collaboratively.

If you are looking for an exciting and highly rewarding role, offering excellent professional development, and if you have a strong commitment to improving the lives of all young people, we encourage you to visit us.



**Beacon View Primary Academy**  
The best in everyone™  
Part of United Learning

An excellent opportunity to build on your previous experience and lead Beacon View through the process of collaborative school improvement.

As the Principal, you will combine the autonomy of leading the school, with the benefit of being part of a successful national group of academies and independent schools which share a mission to bring out 'the best in everyone' and improve the life chances of the children and young people.

Beacon View is one of three schools within a local cluster within the Paulsgrove area in Portsmouth, with all schools being within walking

distance of each other. Cluster partnership will enable high quality, bespoke school improvement and wider opportunities for both staff and pupils to work collaboratively across the schools.

If you are looking for an exciting, challenging and highly rewarding role within a Group that offers excellent professional development, and you have an unshakeable commitment to improving the lives of children and families, we look forward to hearing from you.



**COBHOLM  
PRIMARY ACADEMY**

## YEAR 6 LEAD TEACHER

**SALARY: MPR/UPR + TLR 2A (£2,796)**

**PERMANENT, FULL TIME**

**STARTING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

Cobholm Primary Academy is a small school with a big heart and we're looking for an enthusiastic and inspiring Year 6 Lead Teacher to join our leadership team.

This key leadership role will take responsibility for assessment within the primary school and will be a lead teacher, modelling exceptional practice. The successful candidate will ensure that:

- Student attainment, progress and achievement are effectively analysed and used to inform decision making and curriculum planning;
- Learning outcomes are triangulated and referenced with benchmarks;
- Supporting teachers to understand and make effective use of assessment to address the needs of students.

The successful candidate will be an active part of the school leadership team. They will be deployed into Year 6 as a teacher, working alongside Year 6 colleagues.



**Blatchington  
Mill School**  
Involvement, Achievement & Care

## SENCo (Permanent)

**Leadership ISR 7-11/SCP 11-£52,643**

**From January 2021**

An exciting and highly rewarding opportunity to lead in an innovative and exciting environment managing the provision of SEND students and improving educational outcomes. You would oversee our provision for SEND and be part of the extended senior leadership team which would provide an excellent career progression route into senior leadership for the right candidate.

If you would like to join us, and feel you could thrive in a collegiate and positive atmosphere then visit our website for further details:

<https://www.blatchingtonmill.org.uk/key-information/vacancies/>

**Closing date: 3rd Dec – Midday**

Blatchington Mill is committed to safeguarding our students; we expect all staff and volunteers to support this commitment. Criminal record checks will be carried out and a full, enhanced DBS clearance is required for all positions.

Applications are encouraged from black and ethnic minority candidates, as these groups are under-represented on the school's staff.  
(Race Relations Act sections 35-38 apply).

**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 [hrf@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk](mailto:hrf@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk)**



**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](mailto:sally@peridotpartners.co.uk) | 07904 158737**

**Drew Richardson-Walsh | [drew@peridotpartners.co.uk](mailto: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.*





## University Collegiate School Learning Innovation Opportunity

QUEST is seeking a Principal who has passion, determination and enthusiasm to lead our expert team at the UCS in Bolton.

**This once in a lifetime opportunity is for a leader who wants to shape the future of our new University Collegiate School as it grows and transforms the lives of our students.**

### Join US to Unlock your Potential.

#### Do you have:

- High expectations and share our Spirit of Purpose
- Successful Leadership experience
- Commitment, dedication and drive to succeed
- Digital expertise to deliver our cutting-edge vision
- A desire to support and secure achievement for all, staff and students alike

#### Are you:

- Values-led, research-informed and impact-focussed
- Inspirational
- Motivational
- Forward thinking & curious

If you want to make a difference and transform lives, you'll fit right in. We seek those that have a determination for success, a thirst for continued learning and a drive to be relentlessly ambitious for the students and communities they serve.

**If you are interested in joining our family, we'd love to hear from you!**

**Please contact Tonia Hewitt at [t.hewitt@QUESTTrust.org.uk](mailto:t.hewitt@QUESTTrust.org.uk) or call 01942 834000 / 07881363436 for further information.**

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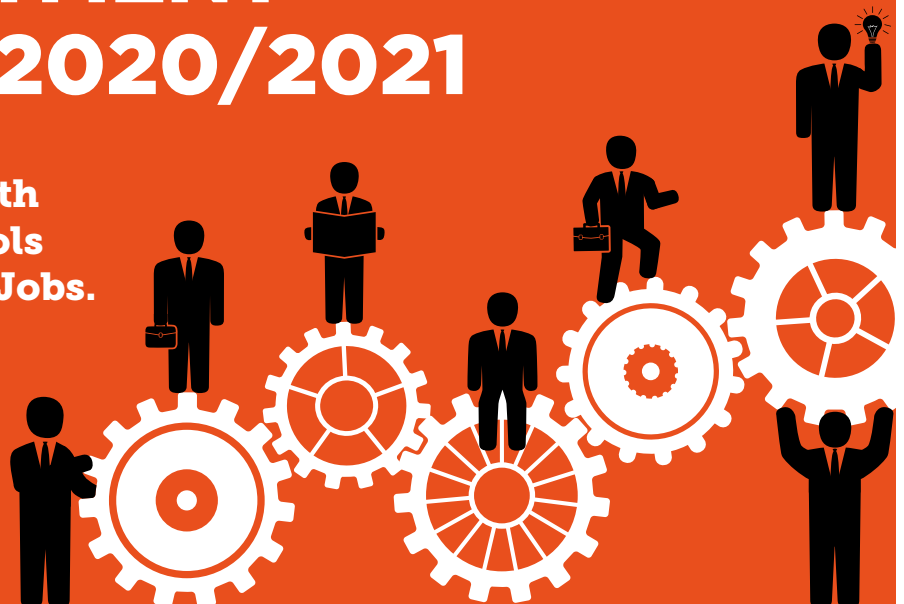
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