

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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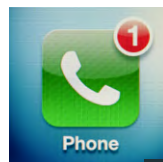


'There is only one Plan B: Reinstate exams'



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Photo:UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor

- ✗ Schools are facing near two-month wait for final exams plan
- ✗ Closure chaos forces school leaders to turn pupils away
- ✗ Prime minister's promise of more laptops doesn't materialise
- ✗ Second mass testing U-turn as DfE says it's NOT mandatory

# SCHOOLS WEEK

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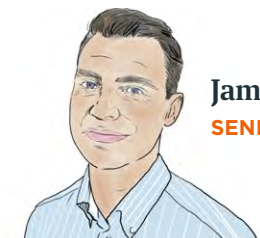
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## News

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# Calls for Williamson to quit after chaotic U-turns leave school leaders scrambling

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

School leaders across England were left scrambling to implement last-minute partial closures this week after a chaotic series of U-turns and confusing announcements by the government.

After resisting repeated calls for further restrictions on pupil attendance over recent weeks, Boris Johnson announced on Monday night that schools would move to remote education until February half-term at the earliest.

Only vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers will receive face-to-face provision, the prime minister said, with the majority learning at home.

But unions this week warned of huge pressure on schools, with some settings reporting much larger numbers of pupils in attendance than during the first lockdown last spring.

The chaos has led to widespread calls for the education secretary, Gavin Williamson, to resign. Of almost 6,000 school staff polled by Teacher Tapp, 92 per cent said Williamson should quit.

Monday's announcement on partial closures and the cancellation of exams marked the fourth and fifth government U-turns on schools in just five days.

This week has also seen more stringent requirements introduced for the amount of remote education schools have to provide to pupils at home, and a call from Williamson for parents to shop schools to Ofsted if they don't feel that "suitable" provision is on offer.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL leadership union, said Williamson's announcement had "revealed a lot about the government's attitude to education".

"It did feel to me like lots of red meat was being thrown by the secretary of state to the back-benchers, and I'd like to think that at a time of national crisis we could rise above that."

Heads are left grappling with the fall-out of huge demand for on-site provision.

Photo: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor

Gavin Williamson

The government's list of critical workers now includes more than 40 different roles across eight sectors, and families have been told their children are eligible to attend school even if only one parent is on the list.

The issue has also been compounded by guidance from the government stating that pupils who have "difficulty engaging in remote education" may be classed as vulnerable. The government's advice to use "local discretion" has led to confusion over which pupils should be allowed to attend.

In a poll of 1,647 NAHT members conducted on Wednesday, 32 per cent said they had between 20 and 30 per cent of pupils on-site at the time, while 23 per cent said they had between 30 and 40 per cent. Fourteen per cent said they had more than 40 per cent of pupils in.

NAHT general secretary Paul Whiteman said he was "increasingly concerned" about the "sheer demand for key worker and vulnerable pupil places this week. This could seriously undermine the impact of lockdown measures, and may even run the risk of extending school closures," he added.

ASCL has also warned that its members are reporting "very high demand for places for the children of key workers in primary schools, resulting in 50 per cent or more of children being on site in some schools".

The pressure has led to reports that some

schools are seeking to only take children whose parents work in certain professions on the critical worker list.

Government guidance states schools "should not limit attendance" of key worker children, but Barton said: "Leaders are going to have to be saying, 'sorry folks, this is the priority list', because the wider it becomes, the more it becomes business as usual.

"So what we will get into then I think is school leaders looking down their list and asking, 'Who are the young people who we are able to have in school in order to keep numbers appropriate and proportionate?' None of this is about wanting to limit children's education, but we do have to do it in a structured way."

The government's announcement came after primary schools outside Covid hotspots had been due to reopen for the first day of the new term.

But many remained closed on Monday because of staff shortages. The National Education Union reported that around 6,000 primary schools received so-called section 44 letters, which invoke workers' right not to work in an unsafe environment.

The advice has now been withdrawn following the closure announcement. But a DfE letter, sent to heads on Wednesday, recommends they seek legal advice "if required" to challenge such section 44 letters.

## Speed read



# Lockdown 3: all the new rules you need to know

It's been a busy week in education announcements. But fear not – we've got everything you need to know in the one place.

## Partial closures

Mainstream schools will only provide face-to-face provision for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers until at least February half term.

It's the same for alternative provision and special schools, but the government acknowledges the nature of their intakes means they may be open to all pupils.

There's "no limit" to the number of eligible pupils who can attend. A pupil is eligible if they have just one parent who is a key worker. Vulnerable children includes those who have difficulty engaging in remote education, but decisions are based on "local discretion".



## Attendance

Schools should "encourage" vulnerable children to attend, and should follow up if they don't, but can grant absences if parents want to keep them at home.

Schools forced to put a "temporary stop" on on-site provision following public health advice are encouraged to "work collaboratively with other schools and education providers and other local partners" to "maximise opportunities for face-to-face provision for vulnerable children".



## Workforce

All workers in England have been urged to work from home if they can, and that includes school staff. School leaders are "best placed to determine the workforce that is required in school".

School staff classed as clinically extremely vulnerable are "advised that they should not attend the workplace".

Clinically vulnerable staff "can continue to attend school where it is not possible to work from home", but should follow sector-specific measures to "minimise the risks of transmission".



## Exams and assessment

GCSEs and A-levels won't go ahead in 2021, and will be replaced with "a form of teacher assessed grades", but with no algorithm applied to the grades.



A two-week consultation will be launched by Ofqual next week.

All statutory key stage 1 and key stage 2 tests and teacher assessments will be cancelled, including the phonics screening check.

It's up to schools if they want to run BTEC and vocational exams this month. If not, students will be given a grade where there's "enough evidence". It may also be possible to take assessments at a later date.

## Remote education

For key stage 1, three hours of remote education must be provided per day. Key stage 2 pupils should be provided with four hours and this increases to five hours for both key stage 3 and 4.

Provision should include "both recorded or live direct teaching time, and time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently".

The DfE committed to providing 140,000 more laptops by the end of next week, taking the total delivered so far to 750,000 of the promised 1 million.



## Ofsted

New "supportive" monitoring inspections will also go ahead from January 18.

Ofsted will "enforce" remote education requirements and can inspect a school of any grade if it has "serious concerns" over their provision. It will act on parental complaints.



## Free school meals

Extra funding to help schools provide food parcels or meals for eligible children. However, where the above is not possible, a national voucher scheme will be set up. Further details have not yet been announced.



## Mass testing

Schools that have set up mass testing can still use it for school staff and pupils in attendance.



## News

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# Why isn't plan B ready to go? Schools face two-month wait for exams plan

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**  
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Ministers have been accused of a "dereliction of duty" as schools face a near two-month wait for the government's plan to replace GCSEs and A-levels with teacher assessments.

Few details were released this week after the exam cancellations were announced on Monday, apart from the government saying it will "trust teachers rather than algorithms" and provide training to ensure grades are given "fairly and consistently".

The government said it had contingency plans, but Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said the details would need to be "fine-tuned".

Ofqual will launch a two-week consultation next week and hopes to reveal the final plan by the end of February if a consensus can be reached.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said it was frustrating that an "off-the-shelf plan B" was not ready to go.

"Ministers have been so busy insisting exams will take place that they have failed to ensure there is a contingency system that can be immediately rolled out. This is, frankly, a dereliction of duty."

Last year the government was forced to abandon calculated grades after about 40 per cent of teacher assessed grades were downgraded under Ofqual's algorithm.

Williamson said the government had "learned lessons" after last year's arrangements "did not deliver what they needed" with the impact felt "painfully by students and their parents".

*Schools Week* understands meetings have begun between the Department for Education, the regulator and exam boards to determine what will be



in the consultation.

Simon Lebus, the new Ofqual chief who started on Monday, said a combination of evidence used to inform teacher assessment could include elements such as classroom interactions, homework and mock exams.

Speaking on the BBC's PM programme, Lebus said he had "concerns" about extra workload for teachers and how complex the system would be for the awarding organisations to manage.

But he said without "external verification" of results, teachers would face an "intolerable burden".

Lebus also told the BBC that he expected differential learning loss between students to be dealt with separately from grading. However, an expert group promised before Christmas to advise the government on a solution has still not been set up.

Lebus also confirmed Ofqual intended for GCSE and A-levels to be broadly in line with last summer's generous grades.

But he warned: "The way ahead is not straightforward: exams and standardised assessments are the fairest way of determining what a student knows and can do."

Ofqual said it was "not starting from scratch: we have been considering different scenarios for some time and we have, of course, learned lessons from last summer".

But Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, questioned why Williamson had kept a contingency for teacher-assessed grades "from the sector".

"The NEU, alongside other unions, had called for structures to enable such a back-up option to exams in October. Had these structures been put in place then we would be in a much better position now to make it happen."

Results' days could also be brought forward. Asked about this in parliament, Williamson said it would be under "active consideration".

He said bringing forward the dates – usually in August – would give students more time for appeals. "It also gives them more time to make the best choices for them and their future."



Gavin Williamson



Simon Lebus

# Ofsted given enforcer role on remote learning duty

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

Schools have been warned to expect an Ofsted inspection if parents have concerns over the “quantity and quality” of remote education on offer – despite the government only revealing its online learning expectations yesterday afternoon.

Education secretary Gavin Williamson informed schools on Wednesday that remote education expectations would be increased, with Ofsted to inspect schools of any grade where parents have reported “serious concerns”.

The announcement was made just two days after schools were informed they would be closed until at least mid-February.

Furthermore, the Department for Education only actually published its new expectations yesterday afternoon. These are the guidelines against which Ofsted will consider schools’ remote education.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders’ union NAHT, said the move was “nothing short of disgraceful”. Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said it was “typically tone-deaf at a time when schools and colleges are working flat out to support their pupils”.

The government has increased the minimum amount of remote education that schools must provide, stipulating that provision must include “both recorded or live direct teaching time, and time for pupils to complete tasks and assignments independently”.

For key stage 1, three hours of remote education per day must be provided. Key stage 2 pupils should be provided with four hours, while this increases to five hours for both key stages 3 and 4.



Previous guidance stated that primary schools should set work totalling around three hours a day, and four hours at secondary.

These expectations follow on from a legal duty placed on schools in October to provide remote education for absent pupils.

The new guidance states schools must select a digital platform for remote education which is used consistently across the school.

Staff must be trained to use the system and it should allow for “interaction, assessment and feedback” with pupils and the ability to check daily “whether pupils are engaging with their work”.

They are also expected to “overcome barriers to digital access for pupils”.

DfE guidance states parents with remote education concerns should “in the first instance raise their concerns with the teacher or headteacher” and report the matter to Ofsted “if the concerns are not resolved”.

Stephen Chamberlain, CEO of Active Learning Trust, said this circumvented existing complaints processes. He said that if parents have concerns, they should raise them with a headteacher but “the next port of call is governors and trusts, not Ofsted”.

“If parents say we’re not delivering what we are meant to deliver we will work with our headteachers to put

that right – but we can’t miss that process out.”

Elsewhere Simon Elliott, chief executive of Community Schools Trust, said some schools “will find this just to be an extra stress and pressure”. He warned the move was “ill-advised” and something “on

reflection he [Williamson] might regret”.

Ofsted’s new “supportive” monitoring inspections will still go ahead this term. The inspections will have a strong focus on the quality of remote education provided, the DfE said.

Ofsted will start inspecting schools, previously judged ‘inadequate’ and ‘requires improvement’, from January 18. While a report will be published – it will not contain a grade.

A spokesperson for the watchdog said: “There are clear requirements about remote learning and our monitoring inspections this term will focus on how well these are being met, to provide reassurance to parents.”



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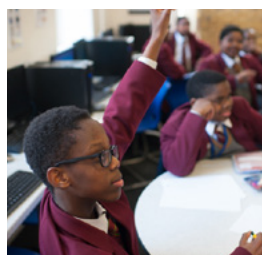
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## News

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## Telecoms giants don't answer zero-rate ed websites call

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

Telecoms companies have poured cold water on calls for them to "zero-rate" education websites, citing technical issues around third-party content.

Calls for unfettered access to online education resources have been growing since the government announced on Monday that most pupils will learn remotely until at least February half-term.

Ofcom estimates that just under one million pupils rely on mobile devices to access the internet, and around one in ten pupils using the government-backed Oak National Academy do so via a mobile.

The "big four" mobile telecoms providers – EE, O2, Vodafone and Three – have all joined a government scheme to offer uplifts to poorer pupils' mobile data via schools.

However, none has committed to zero-rating education websites, which would mean they didn't eat into data allowances at all.

Oak National Academy principal Matt Hood welcomed the government scheme, but warned the administration would be burdensome for schools and said a universal zero-rating approach would be better than making poorer families ask for handouts.

"We are adding education to the list of services that poor families pay more for," he told Schools Week. "The charges if they go over their data packages are so significant that those



families would have to stop educating their kids. That's not OK."

EE said connectivity was "absolutely essential to helping children keep up with their learning throughout the pandemic" but would not commit to zero-rating any education websites.

O2 said it had zero-rated "more sites than any other operator" – including the Hungry Little Minds education resource for pre-school children. But it would not pledge to zero-rate other sites, including Oak.

Vodafone said there were "technical challenges with zero-rating individual websites, including education resources, if some content is hosted from external sources such as YouTube, which is often the case".

Three has said it will provide "unlimited data upgrades to disadvantaged school children in England", but pointed to barriers to zero-rating educational websites, including the issue

around third-party content.

Hood said Oak was working with its video hosting provider Mux to come up with a solution to the third-party content issue that could then be used by various platforms, but was calling on telecoms providers to lend their expertise to the push.

"We are not 100 per cent sure our solution works, but our plucky team of five developers and the team at Mux think we have a technical solution to this problem. If we can prove to them that the technical solution works then at that point I would really hope that they come on board."

It comes as the BBC announced it would provide the "biggest education offer in its history" in a bid to ensure homebound children without internet access can keep learning.

From next week, the BBC will run a three-block of primary school programming on CBBC from 9am, while BBC Two will provide at least two hours of content each weekday for secondary students to support the GCSE curriculum.

Bitesize Daily primary and secondary will also air every day on BBC Red Button as well as making episodes available on demand on BBC iPlayer.

The British Educational Suppliers Association has also said it will provide free support to teachers including via its LendED platform, an online tool offering the opportunity to search, select and trial education technology resources for free.

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR\_93

## New laptop target, but no new devices...

The government has set a target of delivering 140,000 laptops by the end of next week, but there won't be any new devices and secondary schools will be prioritised.

Boris Johnson said on Monday that the government would provide "more devices to support remote education", after announcing that most pupils would learn online until at least February half term.

But on Wednesday Gavin Williamson only pledged "getting three-quarters of a million" devices "out by the end of next week".

While this is a new target, it's not a commitment for more devices: they are being provided as part of the government's "commitment to deliver a million digital devices across the country".

That commitment was made last month, when Williamson promised an additional 440,000 devices, on top of the 562,421 that had been delivered or dispatched by December 18. About 340,000 of those were sent in the 2020-21 academic year.

About 50,000 devices were dispatched on Monday, with another 50,000 due to be sent

out by the end of this week. The remainder of the 750,000 devices – about 90,000 – will be sent out next week.

This leaves about 250,000 due to be shipped later in the term. Secondary schools can now order their allocations, but primary schools won't be invited to order until "the coming weeks". Schools in disadvantaged areas will be prioritised.

Some schools are still waiting to receive laptops scheduled to arrive in December, while others are raising cash from the local community to pay for devices.

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# Heads offer up empty schools for vaccine centres

JAMES CARR

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EXCLUSIVE

Schools are offering their sites as vaccination centres as they close their doors to most pupils.

School leaders and councils say the spring closure presents a “real opportunity” to help the fight against Covid-19.

However, one council said it had “no current plans” to use schools in this way and NHS England remained silent on the plan.

Stephen Mitchell, the chief executive of the Oak Multi Academy Trust in Leicestershire, said he had contacted his local NHS trust to propose Oak’s five school sites be used as vaccination centres.

Subject to the “logistics of keeping provision open for key worker and vulnerable children”, the trust was “very happy to help establish vaccine centres in the heart of the communities we serve”.

He said that while schools did not have the staffing to help to administer vaccines, “there is a lot of capacity in their estates”. He hoped to “turn over the availability of our sites” to experts who could run vaccination services.

The government has ordered 100 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, following the Pfizer vaccine last year.

The Oxford vaccine, which has been rolled out since Monday, is easier to distribute and can be stored in a normal fridge – in contrast to its Pfizer



counterpart which must be stored at -70C.

Matthew Clements-Wheeler, the chair of Kenilworth Multi-Academy Trust (KMAT) and the former chair of the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL), said it would be “wonderful to see school buildings used in this way”.

As part of their preparation for mass testing, schools had identified spaces that were “safe for medical procedures” with “easily wipeable” hard floors.

They would allow “appropriate circulation and social distancing” and would be able to handle large numbers of people.

A report from the Adam Smith Institute think tank on Monday said the use of public venues such as school gyms would speed up vaccination.

However, Clements-Wheeler warned that such a scheme would only work if there were enough clinical staff. Smaller primary schools might not

be suitable, he said.

Vic Goddard, the co-headteacher of Passmores Academy in Harlow, Essex, has offered his gym to aid the vaccine rollout – a move supported by his local council but not by Essex, the school’s education authority.

He said schools could provide “secure, clean buildings”, and that most have “sizeable car parks” and established one-way systems that would allow the vaccine to be administered safely and efficiently.

“Schools tend to have communities around them – which means direct walking distance for people.

“We have hundreds of thousands of square feet of schools empty right now, let’s use them. They’re community facilities, let’s use them for the benefit of the community.”

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said it was “typically public-spirited of headteachers” to offer their buildings. “Where it is a possibility it seems like an avenue well worth exploring.”

Mark Ingall, the leader of Harlow Council, said it would “fully support” Goddard’s move at Passmores, but a spokesperson for the school’s education authority, Essex County Council, said there were “no current plans for vaccine distribution centres to be set up in schools in Harlow”.

NHS England did not respond to a request for comment.

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## DfE silent on ANOTHER mass testing U-turn

Secondary schools remain in the dark as to whether it is mandatory to roll-out mass testing.

On Monday Sarah Maclean, a DfE director working on the testing regime, told schools it was “not mandatory” to take part.

“There are a couple of questions about ‘do schools and colleges have to offer testing’ and the answer from the DfE is no, it’s not mandatory.

“However, we do expect that most schools and colleges would want to.”

Her comments were made during an online

mass testing training webinar.

However, Gavin Williamson told the House of Commons on December 30 the testing regime had moved from “being optional and an offer to schools to being something we require schools to do”. He repeated this the following day during a Radio 4 interview.

Schools began receiving swab collection kits and PPE on Monday, but the DfE has not responded to requests by *Schools Week* to clarify if testing is mandatory.

Meanwhile, George Constantinides, the professor of digital computation at Imperial

College London, criticised the department for the “highly misleading” template letter it wants schools to use to explain the testing to parents.

The letter says the test is accurate as it has a 99.68 per cent specificity rating.

But Constantinides said specificity showed how accurate the test was identifying those without Covid, rather than positive cases.

The test is about 76.8 per cent accurate in identifying positive cases.

The DfE has not responded to requests for comment, but the template was removed.

# SEND staff 'should get vaccine priority'

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

INVESTIGATES

Public health experts have backed calls for the government to consider vaccinating special school staff in the first priority phase.

Ministers are already under pressure to vaccinate all teachers before half-term, with a petition due to be debated in parliament and Matt Hancock, the health secretary, saying they have a "very strong case" for priority jabs.

However, while science experts are not convinced all teachers should be vaccinated as priority, several say the special educational needs sector could be the exception.

Professor Allyson Pollock, the director of Newcastle University's centre for excellence in regulatory science, said most children were at "very low risk" from Covid-19, which meant teachers should not be treated the same as NHS and care home staff who worked with high-risk groups.

But Pollock, who is a former member of the Independent Sage group, said there "may well be" a case for special school staff and residents in care to receive the vaccine sooner.

The call comes as the government expects special schools to remain open at normal capacity during lockdown as most of their pupils fall into the "vulnerable children" category.

Adam Boddison, the chief executive of the National Association for Special Educational Needs, said that if special schools had to stay fully open for children who might be vulnerable to the virus, "then it's completely reasonable to say the workforce has to be prioritised for the vaccine".

Many pupils "are not able to self-swab" so teachers often have to physically help them, while staff wearing PPE can be distressing for high-needs pupils.

"Teachers don't feel safe. They need to be in those vaccination priority groups."

On Wednesday, Hancock said teachers had a "very strong case" for priority after clinically vulnerable groups.

This could mean that teachers who did not fall under existing priority categories could be moved up the queue above the last five groups set out by the JCVI for the first phase (see table).

Meanwhile Jenny Harries, the deputy chief medical officer, has also said teachers could be



considered for vaccination "when the first four groups are completed".

It follows a call from Robert Halfon, the chair of the Commons education select committee, for teachers and support staff to be vaccinated so schools could reopen.

Simon Knight, the joint headteacher at Frank Wise special school in Oxfordshire, said vaccinations for staff should be prioritised "given the close contact" and "often clinical nature" of their work.

Other public health experts lent their support to the call, but warned of obstacles.

Joshua Moon, a research fellow in the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex Business School, said prioritising special school staff was "a good idea".

"On principle, I can see where that idea comes in. The difficulty is always going to be how do you

prioritise limited resources, and that will come down to your definition of the most vulnerable.

"However, it's not difficult to make the case that special educational needs children fall into that category."

But Stephen Evans, professor of pharmacoepidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said data records would need to be improved first.

"A major problem in getting SEND teachers vaccinated will be that the NHS records, through which people are invited for a vaccine, do not contain occupation, especially with as fine a classification as SEND teachers specifically."

Other information should be linked with NHS records to identify these staff, he said.

The government has set a target to deliver two million vaccines a week. There are about 500,000 full-time teachers in the UK.

## Priority Risk group

- 1 Residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults
- 2 All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
- 3 All those 75 years of age and over
- 4 All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals (not including pregnant women and those under 16 years of age)
- 5 All those 65 years of age and over
- 6 Adults aged 16 to 65 years in an at-risk group
- 7 All those 60 years of age and over
- 8 All those 55 years of age and over
- 9 All those 50 years of age and over
- 10 Rest of the population (to be determined)

# DfE and PHE not on same page over school face mask evidence

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

EXCLUSIVE

A teaching union is demanding to see the “clear scientific evidence base” behind any government decision on face masks in schools.

It comes as freedom of information requests show the Department for Education and Public Health England are using different evidence.

The current guidance is that staff and pupils in communal areas in secondary schools wear coverings. Primary school heads can decide whether to ask staff or visitors to wear masks, while pupils are not expected to.

Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said until clearer scientific evidence was publicly shared, primary school staff and secondary school staff and pupils should wear masks indoors “at all times”.

“We do not understand why the government didn’t adopt our precautionary approach – pending publication of any clear scientific evidence base, which of course we would like to see.”

The Department for Education responded to a Freedom of Information request for the scientific evidence behind its decisions around face masks with a link to a paper published in July.

The paper from the Children’s Task and Finish Group, which is part of Sage, said there was “enough evidence” for cloth face masks to be worn in enclosed spaces, but that younger children’s brain development could be harmed if they could not see people’s faces.

However, the paper does not link to the scientific evidence for this claim, nor to any scientific papers weighing up the risks of viral transmission versus any detriment to teaching and learning.



Meanwhile, the same FOI request sent to Public Health England returned a different set of links. One was to a Sage meeting in April, another from a June review of face coverings.

Both FOI requests were well over the 20-day legal limit for a response, at 47 days for PHE and 71 days for the DfE.

Last week *Schools Week* revealed the government seemed to be reconsidering its position on face masks. A DfE official said it planned to make them compulsory for secondary staff and pupils in classrooms.

However, new guidance published yesterday states face coverings should still only be worn in communal areas. The DfE did not respond to a request for comment.

Some schools were already moving towards masks in classrooms before the latest lockdown. The Northern Education Trust had asked secondary pupils to wear them during lessons, following anxiety over the new covid strain.

Rob Tarn, the trust’s chief executive, told *Schools Week* that “recommendations” around face masks were harder for staff to enforce.

“I want the government to receive the evidence from the science, and then tell me what to do. I’d welcome further guidance just saying, ‘this is or isn’t allowed’.

“For example, it would be beneficial if we would simply hear from the government that there is or isn’t an expectation for children to wear masks.”

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said the guidance on face masks in schools was “complex and confusing”.

He urged the DfE to “review this alongside other safety measures” and “provide a concise and easily accessible summary based on the most up-to-date scientific and public health advice” before normal teaching resumed.

# £350m NTP faces slipping behind schedule

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

A £350 million flagship programme offering tuition to help pupils catch up may now fall behind schedule as providers have been told delivery milestones can be “re-forecast”.

Plans to provide additional funding to the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) scheme are also being reviewed as a result of school closures.

Tuition providers already signed up to the scheme are now rapidly going through safeguarding and due diligence checks to ensure they can switch their offer online for pupils to access at home.

On Monday only 14 of the 33 providers were able to do this, but this has since risen to 22.

The NTP now expects most tutoring this term to take place either at a student's home or at school for those still attending.

But providers have been told they can now work with the NTP to “re-forecast milestone targets” so they don't feel “pressured by pre-set targets”.

An email sent on Monday, before the prime minister's lockdown announcement, said that tuition sessions could be “loaded more heavily towards later in the year (eg increase the number of hours per week) and delivery targets can be adjusted to account for this”.

A round of additional funding for providers to deliver tuition to more pupils was due to launch this Friday, according to the email.

But the NTP is reviewing the timeline as it needs to “consider the impact that the closures might have on the overall delivery of the NTP”. It said the current uncertainty made it unable to make a firm decision “right now”.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said that “as with much else” the NTP was “clearly going to face added complications in terms of delivery following the decision to restrict opening in schools”.

“We have always said that this was a particularly complicated way of delivering catch-up support ... it would have been far simpler to have provided the money direct to schools.”

Approved tuition partners were expected to have contingency plans in place if face-to-face tutoring was disrupted.

## National Tutoring Programme

The NTP website reads: “This could include moving tuition online (where organisations already have online systems up and running) or pausing tuition until delivery becomes feasible again and changing the onward pattern of delivery.”

The NTP said its team would make sure planned tuition went ahead, but any postponed sessions could be rearranged or moved online.

“These choices are ones for each individual school to make. Schools and tuition partners will continue to work closely and collaborate to support additional learning for the children that need it most,” said a spokesperson.

The NTP was working with all tuition partners to make sure it could “help those disadvantaged pupils that we set out to reach when we launched two months ago”.

The NTP has enrolled 90,000 students in two months, just over a third of the 250,000 promised catch-up under the programme. It has a conversion rate – where schools who expressed an interest in signing a contract

with the provider – of 87 per cent.

Unions are now calling for more catch-up funding following school closures.

Barton said the “catch-up funding provided by the government was in respect of lost learning in the first lockdown. Since then we have had a highly disrupted autumn term and now another lockdown.

“This is very likely to have led to further learning loss and the government will need to provide more funding for catch-up support to schools and colleges over the coming months.”

In guidance published yesterday, the DfE said it recognised it might be “challenging” for schools to deliver effective catch-up support.

Schools can continue to offer tuition, and the academic mentor programme will also continue online.

“Schools should also use this period to strategically plan the catch-up support required for their pupils in the next half-term.”

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

## Food voucher scheme back, Edenred set to run it again

Pupils eligible for free school meals will again be offered supermarket vouchers through a national scheme if their school cannot provide food to them at home.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said extra funding would be provided to help schools provide “food parcels or meals” for

eligible children.

However, where this was not possible, the government “will ensure a national voucher scheme is in place”. It is expected to be run again by Edenred, but the company would not confirm this.

Further guidance is due to be published.

# Stretched special schools allowed to prioritise provision

SAMANTHA BOOTH  
@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Ministers have been asked to “guarantee” laws won’t be relaxed again that “downgrade” support for SEND pupils, as special schools are granted flexibility over provision during the latest lockdown.

The Department for Education confirmed to Schools Week that special and alternative provision schools will be closed to all but vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers, after confusion on their status.

However, any child with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) is deemed as vulnerable and able to attend school during lockdown – which accounts for nearly 98 per cent of special school pupils – effectively meaning they will be running at full capacity.

Sector leaders demanded clarity from the government this week on vulnerability criteria, warning that running full classrooms risked staff invoking section 44 notices, leading to school closures.

Section 44 of the employment rights act 1996 states that employees have the right “not to be subjected to any detriment” if they leave or refuse to return to work because they believe it is dangerous.

After days of waiting, updated guidance was published yesterday offering some flexibilities for special schools on attendance.

It says that special schools should continue to welcome and encourage pupils to attend full-time, where parents want them to.

Where special schools cannot provide “their usual interventions and provision at adequate staffing ratios, or with staff with vital specialist training” they should “seek to resume as close as possible to the child or young person’s specific provision as soon as possible”.

It added: “Pupil level risk assessments, which were used last spring, should not be used to filter children and young people in or out of attendance, but could be helpful to prioritise the provision a child or



young person can get if full time provision for all is not possible.”

Adam Boddison, chief executive of the National Association for Special Educational Needs, said the guidance provides “sufficient flexibility and nuance to support local decision making” and addressed the “immediate concerns of the sector”.

Susan Douglas, chief executive of the Eden Academy Trust, added it was “sensible and pragmatic”. “It has been slow coming, but it seems a good way forward. None of us have our full staff teams available so this gives us the flex we needed.”

For three months last year, the government relaxed the duty of councils to provide support for SEND pupils during the covid pandemic.

They faced a judicial review which found that while education secretary Gavin Williamson had not acted unlawfully, “the impact on parents and their children with SEND was sudden and severe and came at a time when there had already been serious failures in delivery of SEND provision, before the pandemic struck”.

In a letter seen by Schools Week, Tulip Siddiq, Labour’s shadow minister for children and early years, asked children’s minister Vicky Ford for a “guarantee” that the government “will not be bringing forward legislation to downgrade the legal rights of children in care and those with SEND



Boris Johnson

of the kind that was implemented during the first coronavirus lockdown”.

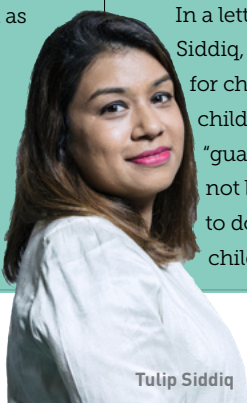
She also said there have been reports that some children with SEND have been told they cannot be accommodated in special school this week due to staff pressures.

Conservative MP Tim Loughton, the MP for East Worthing and Shoreham, told the Commons on Wednesday that he was “hearing complaints” from parents that children entitled to attend were being placed on “waiting lists”.

One parent tweeted SEND Action, a campaign network of families, individuals and organisations, to say that a special school was only allowing the “most” vulnerable back into school. “No discussion with parents at all.”

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said it was “absolutely right” that children on EHCPs were entitled and “should be allowed into school”.

The DfE has been contacted for comment.



Tulip Siddiq

# Private school furlough claim not 'in spirit of scheme'

JESS STAUFENBERG

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EXCLUSIVE

The country's biggest academy trust furloughed staff across its private schools for the Christmas holiday, a tactic one law firm advises is "unlikely to be within the spirit of the scheme".

United Learning, which has 74 academies and 14 private schools, applied for public funds to pay teacher salaries from December 12 to January 4, emails seen by *Schools Week* reveal.

Michael Hall, headmaster at Ashford School in Kent, told staff at the start of December that United Learning had decided "to make wider use of the furlough scheme across all the trust's independent schools" during the holiday.

The email added that all teaching staff at Ashford would be furloughed for three weeks of the Christmas period.

Hall said there was "no immediate risk to jobs", but that school finances were "not sustainable".

Government guidance on the furlough scheme says employees should not be placed on furlough "just because they are going to be on paid leave".

It also says employees can only be placed on furlough "if coronavirus is affecting your operations".

A United Learning spokesperson said the trust had followed all legal advice, including not furloughing anyone on leave, and had taken advice from lawyers, auditors and HMRC.

But Joanne Moseley, an employment lawyer at Irwin Mitchell, said she had advised her private school clients not to use the furlough scheme in this way.

"Yes, in principle, as a private school if you've suffered a reduction in fee income because of coronavirus, you



can access the furlough scheme.

"But here it appears the school has used the furlough scheme to finance the Christmas holiday period. You can't just access the scheme to fund staff holidays."

Harrison Clark Rickerbys solicitors says on its website that it may be possible to furlough staff during the Christmas holidays, but any decision should "ideally be made on a case-by-case basis".

"In many cases we consider that it is unlikely to be within the spirit of the scheme to utilise it in this way."

But the United Learning spokesperson said that independent schools were "fully entitled" to furlough staff, as were other significantly affected charities and businesses.

The issue highlights the financial pressures many private schools have faced during the coronavirus period.

Although there is no overall estimate for income loss for the sector, examples

such as a prep school in York closing after a £5 million budget shortfall demonstrate the scale of the challenge.

In his email, Hall said the "loss of over 40 boarders" since 2019 had "severely impacted" finances.

Moseley said the trust's decision to apply for furlough money also raised the question of differing interpretations of government guidance.

"The guidance is complicated, not least because it's not all in one handy place. There are at least 12 different documents that organisations have to read to understand how the furlough scheme works."

She said that HMRC had six years to look at claims and would ask for money claimed in error to be returned.

In September, HMRC told the public accounts committee the error and fraud rate on the furlough scheme was likely between 5 and 10 per cent – between £1.75 and £3.5 billion.

# Institute of Teaching is 'Gibb-isation of education'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

The new government-funded Institute for Teaching has been branded as another example of the "Gibb-isation of education".

The Department for Education announced on Saturday that it would establish a new provider to deliver initial teacher training, the government's early career framework for new teachers and national professional qualifications for more experienced staff.

The institute, which will be set up with some of the £22 million allocated at the spending review for improving teacher quality, will be run by a third party after a tender process this year, and deliver its first courses from next September.

The government said the institute would attempt to replicate the approach of schools that "combine high standards of pupil behaviour and discipline with a broad knowledge-based and ambitious curriculum".

But one leader, who wanted to remain anonymous, said the institute was "part of the Gibb-isation of education as we know it", pointing to schools minister Nick Gibb's vocal support for knowledge-rich curriculums and strict behaviour policies.

Andy Mellor, a former headteacher and president of the NAHT who now leads the Blackpool Teaching School, said there seemed to be "no obvious rationale" for the decision.

Latest figures show Ofsted rated all ITT settings 'good' or 'outstanding'.

Mellor said he was concerned that the DfE's minister-led view of teaching was cited as "evidence-informed but feels ideologically driven".

However, Emma Hollis, from the National Association of School-Based Initial Teacher Trainers, said her organisation "broadly welcomed" the new institute's "focus on evidence-based approaches in teacher education, as this will further support high-quality ITT".

The government said the new institute would provide "lifelong training and development for teachers" through "at least four regional campuses".

The training was "likely to be delivered through a blend of online, face-to-face and school-based means".



At its full capacity, it is expected to train about 1,000 trainees, 2,000 early career teachers, 2,000 mentors and 1,000 national professional qualification participants each year.

But James Noble-Rogers, the chief executive of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, said it would "not lead to a net increase in new teachers as those recruited would simply be taken from existing high-quality providers, potentially threatening their viability".

The announcement comes during a period of large-scale upheaval in initial teacher training.

The DfE's recruitment and retention strategy, published in 2019, pledged a raft of measures, including more off-timetable support for new teachers.

A new ITT framework was also published later that year, which set out a minimum entitlement for trainee teachers and placed a duty on providers and their partner schools to meet this

entitlement.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said the best schools "combine high standards of pupil behaviour and discipline with a broad knowledge-based and ambitious curriculum, so that every child can learn and flourish".

"Our new Institute of Teaching will help equip all teachers to deliver an education like this, by training them in the best, evidence-based practices."

Organisations interesting in running the new institute will be invited to bid early this year, with a contract expected to be awarded later in the year.

The institute will be funded "in the same way, and to the same level, as other providers in the market", with ITT delivery funded through tuition fees and bursaries, while ECF and NPQ delivery will be funded by the DfE on a "per-participant basis".

## ITT REVIEW OFFICIALLY RELAUNCHED

The 2019 recruitment and retention strategy pledged a review of the ITT market to address duplication and the complexity of the sector, but this was kicked into the long grass following the change of government later that year.

However, *Schools Week* revealed in November last year that the government was to reboot the review,

amid concerns over the quality of some provision.

The government confirmed this last week, announcing an expert group led by Ian Bauckham, an academy trust leader, acting chair of Ofqual, chair of the Oak National Academy online learning platform and an adviser to the government on a number of matters.

# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## The education sector has spoken, Gav: you're 'inadequate'

When a school is failing, there's a clear route for action. Anyone who has concerns – be it parents, staff or even politicians – can go to Ofsted. If their concerns are deemed serious enough, inspectors will scrutinise the ability of a school's leaders.

Those found wanting will be told so – very publicly. Their school will be slapped with an 'inadequate' rating, and leaders often leave.

After another utterly chaotic week, a question many school staff will now be asking is who should they call to report that their education secretary is failing them?

On New Year's Eve, Gavin Williamson assured the sector he was "absolutely confident" there would be no further school reopening delays. Just four days later, schools were told to close to most pupils until mid-February.

This is the same Gavin Williamson who, in the last week of term, took legal action against a London council that urged schools to close early for Christmas over safety concerns. Just weeks later, said council was told to delay the reopening of primary schools to "protect public health and save lives".

In fact, the government U-turned five times over its back-to-school plans in less than a week.

First it was safe for schools to reopen. Then it

was only safe for schools outside Covid "hotspots" to reopen. Then the list of "hotspots" got bigger because they didn't hold up to the first bit of scrutiny.

Mass testing was optional, then mandatory. Now it may be optional again.

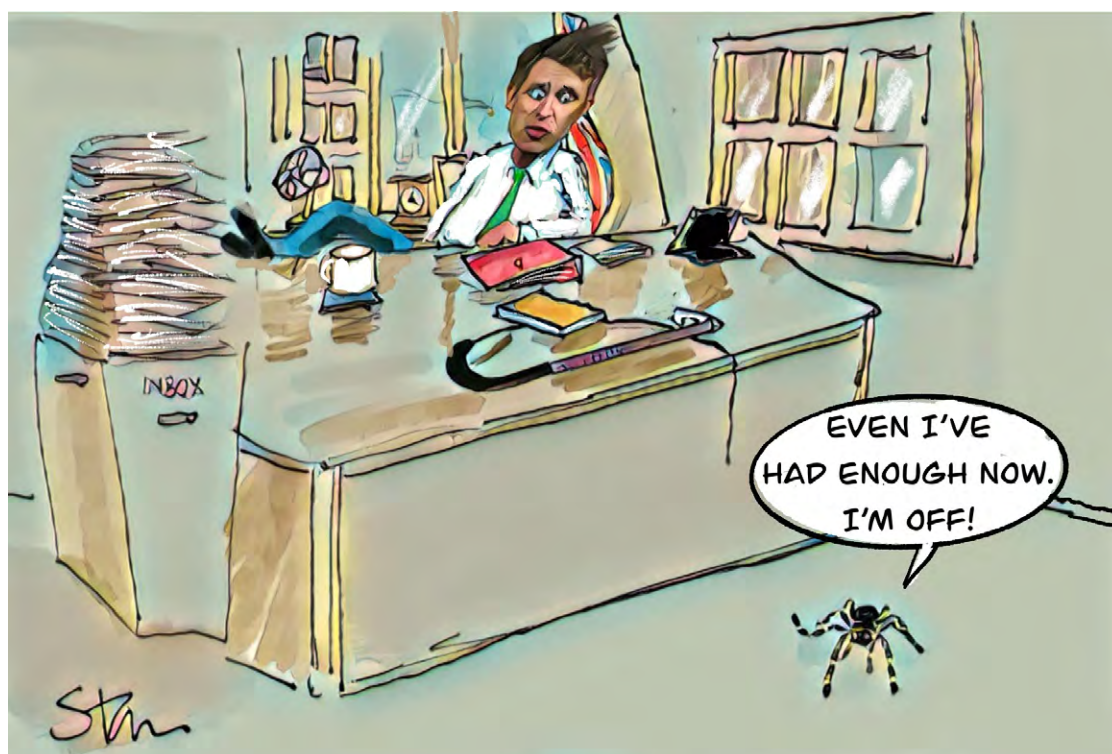
Exams were definitely going ahead, then they weren't. Not to worry, Gav has a plan. But it needs "fine tuning" and could take two months.

Instead of resetting his relationship with the sector this week, Williamson opted for confrontation. He told parents to report schools failing to provide remote education to Ofsted (a day before schools had even been told what was now expected of them in regards to online learning).

Where schools craved clarity, they've been given chaos.

So, let's give Williamson his own rating. Quality of (service to) education: 'inadequate'. Behaviour and attitudes: 'inadequate'. Personal development: 'inadequate'. Leadership and management: 'inadequate'.

It's no surprise that in a poll of 6,000 teachers, 92 per cent said he should resign. It may be Williamson's sole triumph: uniting a normally divided sector.



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## Feature

JL DUTAUT | @DUTAUT



# ‘What family self-identifies as vulnerable?’

Jancis Andrew and Calvin Kipling tell JL Dutaut we need to unpick what we mean by “vulnerable” children”

**A**nother lockdown begins and care for the nation’s vulnerable children is again in the limelight. And as alternative provision and special schools bemoan their lack of mention in the prime minister’s announcement and a dearth of guidance from the Department for Education, spare a thought for virtual school heads. Even in the best of times, they are the forgotten education service.

Yet when it comes to some of the most vulnerable, they are the local authorities’

frontline. And although virtual schools are not physical spaces, they are no less impacted by Covid.

If nothing else, the growing dependency on virtual learning adds to ongoing confusion about what virtual schools are. “The Covid situation is interesting,” says Jancis Andrew, Leeds’ virtual school head, “because it’s been a battle for us to get this idea of virtual away from being a digital learning platform, which we’re absolutely not. What we are is a single, central point of

contact around every child who’s in care.”

Virtual schools became a mandatory part of local authority provision in 2014 after a successful pilot. Every authority now has a virtual school head and the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) is their collective voice and the forum in which they share best practice.

In the simplest terms their role is to oversee the education of looked-after children, to monitor each child’s attendance, attainment and achievement,

# In conversation with... virtual school heads

and to ensure their education is a top priority in their care planning. In other words, almost every school is part of a virtual school.

The role of a virtual school head varies from authority to authority. Andrew is responsible for 1,330 students across 300 settings in Leeds. Calvin Kipling, Darlington's virtual school head, has 200 across 70 settings. Each is also responsible for those on out-of-authority placements.

A 2012 Ofsted report, which looked at the effectiveness of the approach in nine local authorities, found evidence of "improving educational outcomes" for looked-after children in all of them, and that those outcomes went beyond just attainment.

Nine years on, and seven years since the post became mandatory, Kipling, who has held the Darlington job for six years, last year for the first time saw some of the young people in his care through a full secondary education cycle. "I've seen their journey and I can start to reflect on that," he says. Proof that education policy takes longer to embed than it is usually afforded. "We're still in the early days really. But there's a definite benefit in having a virtual school advocating for looked-after children's educational outcomes."

But for all the focus on vulnerable children during the pandemic, virtual school heads are seldom singled out for praise. Behind the scenes, however, their work is respected and valued. For example, Andrew recounts that in the early days of [the first] lockdown there were conversations with



## "Virtual is absolutely not a digital learning platform"

the DfE about the low take-up of "the offer of continuity in attending school for all the vulnerable cohorts".

But respected as they might be, the 2012 Ofsted report also highlighted that funding shortfalls resulted in fluctuating quality and provision, so any improvement since has been in spite of continued austerity. Out-of-authority placements, for example – which the same Ofsted report noted as a challenge for virtual school heads at the time – are directly impacted by local capacity.

As a result, Kipling says that virtual school heads are "probably the most networked people around. They know everyone because they need to lead the local authority's resources to the benefit of looked-after children." Resources are limited but, as Andrew says, they are powerful. "The personal education plan and additional funding through the pupil premium-plus make sure that schools and settings and caregivers are maximising the progress of these children."

Beyond that, one of their most powerful tools is professional development. Virtual heads have been at the heart of a national effort to develop and deliver training in trauma-informed practice. In the Covid context, they spearheaded events and training about the recovery curriculum. "We had such good take-up from schools,"

Calvin Kipling



Jancis Andrew



# In conversation with... virtual school heads

Andrew says, “wanting to get that knowledge and to think about how they were going to support all children to return to school and be successful.”

But their teams are small. Many don't directly line manage anyone. Kipling has two people who report directly to him. Yet both are quick to dismiss the idea of mandating or codifying how big their teams should be. They are clear that this can only be determined by local context – the shape and size of local authority administrations being a key determinant.

However, the flip side of such a highly networked and interdependent way of working is that their practice is impacted by every resource allocation across education – to say nothing of the care sector. Any change in accountability that increases exclusions, any change in funding that affects provision, professional development, recruitment, retention and expertise. Any change in zeitgeist that affects teaching or behaviour management. All are likely to be felt first and hardest by their charges.

And then there's the pandemic.

But its consequences on looked-after children may not be what is assumed on front pages and in concerned opinion pieces about lost learning and forgetting how to use a knife and fork.

The coming weeks will reveal the uptake of provision for vulnerable students in the second round of school closures, but the evidence is that the DfE is repeating decisions that kept many away the first time, not least, according to Andrew, the use of the term “vulnerable”. “What family self-identifies as vulnerable and thinks ‘oh they must be talking about me?’”

In essence, for all the DfE hand-wringing, Andrew and her colleagues felt the reality in March last year was simply that “the message had really hit home for families”. But for some looked-after children, it hit home in a different way. “Early on a foster carer told me what a child in her care said when he heard the prime minister. ‘If he wants me to go to school, then he must not care about me, must he?’”

Boris Johnson's supporters may balk at that, but it speaks to the dangers of generalisation. Children in care and on



## “We’re probably the most networked people around”

the edge of care have different needs. The needs of at-risk children are different again, and it isn't at all clear that school is necessarily the right venue to meet them all. For many Covid has “either exacerbated vulnerabilities or created them when they might not have been there in the first place”, Andrew says.

But she and Kipling want to celebrate carers and to highlight “a phenomenon we didn't see” through the first closures – “a spiral of care placement breakdown”. In fact, despite “hyper-vigilance and anxiety not being uncommon” among this cohort, Andrew says the extra time invested in supporting them at home without having to navigate school “and all the challenges that that can bring” was a strength. “It nurtured something for them that potentially will be a benefit when they go back into school.”

And the past ten months may have yet another benefit for looked-after children's educational experience. The recovery curriculum may seem like a long time ago (or a long way off), but Kipling is certain of

one thing: the experience of the pandemic has resulted in an increase in empathy for looked-after young people. “When you've had to isolate from family members, when you're hyper-vigilant while out and about in the community and when you're very conscious of social distancing ... our young people experience that when they're coming to school in the morning, or when it's break time and they're going out to a busy playground, or when it's a bit too noisy and there are too many people around.”

It's a “very, very marginal gain”, he adds. But if schools engage with virtual schools, then he is confident this empathy can flourish into effective strategies to support young people – and perhaps teachers – with all kinds of vulnerabilities.

To be sure, their role deserves to be celebrated more. Funded more generously too.

And in the meantime, we can honour them by retiring the phrase “vulnerable children”.

# Opinion

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STUART  
LOCK

CEO, Advantage Schools

## Cancelling exams is the wrong decision. They should be reinstated

**Far from the worst thing the DfE could do, changing its mind and reinstating exams would be the best for all concerned, writes Stuart Lock**

Why are they cancelling exams, sir?" I don't know. I can't even think of a plausible reason for the decision several months before it was necessary to make it. And now that the decision is made, we are cast right back to last spring and summer, like some exam-related Groundhog Day.

What do we do instead?

By now, all the arguments against what Williamson has proposed this afternoon are well rehearsed. We know that teacher- or centre-assessed grades are subject to human bias, impossible to moderate and require huge amounts of work while heaping pressure on to teachers. We know parents with the sharpest elbows will pressurise teachers and schools – and they will largely not be those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. We know that around the world, in high-stakes assessments that rely on teacher assessment, there are serious problems with grade inflation.

We know that teacher assessment is also demonstrably biased against

the most disadvantaged pupils. We also know this fact in no way impugns their professionalism.

We know that internal assessments compromise the validity of assessments because of a human tendency to teach to the test. And we know that even if we could get over that, there is no good way to standardise assessments between

schools, let alone grade them.

The fairest form of assessment is the most valid and reliable – the most accurate – form of assessment. We can either award grades on the basis of exams that uncover what pupils know and can do, or on the basis of speculation about what they don't and can't. I can think of no circumstances, even a global pandemic, where the latter is more desirable.

While many DfE decisions in the past ten months have come very late, this one has come too soon and too rashly. More typically, it has come without a satisfactory plan B. Partly, that's because there isn't a possible satisfactory plan B. There is simply no better solution than just sitting



examinations.

But this is a Department for Education that has made a habit of changing its mind. Doing it again on this might be politically unpalatable, but it wouldn't even be in the top ten unpalatable things that have happened this week. In my view, this is one decision they should rescind.

Many of the loudest arguments against examinations are not being made as a result of the current

honestly whether they have the stomach not to, because reinstating examinations next summer is going to take a lot of it. Twelve months from now, the anti-exam voice will only be louder, and the consequences even more severe for young people if it is successful.

Of course, examinations aren't perfect. They don't measure everything; some pupils can find them stressful; some find it difficult to show their knowledge in high-stakes conditions; sometimes the questions can be weighted more to certain areas of a course. However, there is simply no better way of assessing students. In examinations, tasks are common, marking is monitored and awards are standardised.

And yes, some pupils have had unfair access to education during the pandemic and this will undoubtedly have exacerbated unfairness that is already present in the system – through private schooling, tutoring, advantaged home-life, going to better schools or simply having better teachers. But we can't make that unfairness fairer by manipulating the assessment system. All that does is cover up and perpetuate it.

Exams can't fully mitigate against disadvantage, but they do show it and allow us to do something about it. So, let's focus our efforts on that.

**“ The current febrile environment amplifies anti-exam voices**

challenges of the pandemic. They are well-rehearsed arguments by campaigns to try and remove them altogether from our education system, rooted in an ideology that believes there must be a better way, but which hasn't yet deigned to spell out what this is.

These voices are capitalising on well-intended concerns about fairness to try to achieve their goal. The current febrile environment amplifies their voice. But sober consideration of events and the needs of society and individuals shows that these voices fail to solve the problem they identify. Indeed, they only exacerbate it.

In considering this option, the government should ask itself

# Opinion

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

**With regard to disabled children, lessons have not been learned from the situation that arose during Lockdown 1.0, writes Dr Luran Doak**

**A**mid the widespread frustration of families and teachers struggling with the Department for Education's rapidly changing Covid-19 education contingency plans, none can be more justified than those who care for disabled children. This cohort is consistently a post-hoc afterthought in Covid-19 briefings which contain provision for mainstream primaries, mainstream secondaries and colleges only.

For the 147,329 children in England who are currently educated in non-mainstream settings including special(ist) schools, alternative provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), families, teachers and school leaders alike are left speculating on social media about the government's likely plans for them. This is not good enough.

On December 30, the education secretary provided an update on the re-opening of schools. Primary schools (with a few exceptions) would return on January 4, while secondary schools would have a staggered return. Non-mainstream settings were eventually remembered in an update released at 5:50pm on New Year's Eve, requiring them to open the following Monday, leaving them no time to plan for the asymptomatic testing, despite the government's own acknowledgement of the "additional operational and logistical challenges" involved in testing students with learning disabilities. By this point, some special



**DR LURAN DOAK**

Lecturer in special and inclusive education,  
Nottingham Institute of Education

## Special schools deserve so much better from our government

schools had already taken a unilateral decision to close and announced it to parents.

compromised staffing levels) until you consider that in special schools 97.9 per cent of children have EHCPs.

**“It should be a government priority, not an afterthought**

In any case, this advice was then superseded in the prime minister's address to the nation on Monday evening. 'All' schools (that is, mainstream primaries, mainstream secondaries and colleges only) were now to be closed. Once again, there was no mention of specialist settings.

Williamson and Johnson both reiterated that "vulnerable children and children of key workers" should have access to a school place. According to the latest government definition of 'vulnerable', the category encompasses children who hold Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). These are typically issued to children with the most significant level of disability, currently 3.3 per cent of children in England. Offering places to such a small minority may sound feasible (even with

Effectively, special schools are asked to stay open at near-full capacity, a situation the government does not appear to have fully considered.

Regrettably, the same situation unfolded in Lockdown 1.0 and lessons have not been learned. In May 2020 a group of colleagues from Nottingham Trent University, together with local stakeholder organisations, submitted a report to the Commons education select committee on the impact of Covid on education and children's services. We noted that despite the government requirement that children with EHCPs should be in school during the March lockdown, special schools did not feel able to provide this for 97.9 per cent of their school population. As a result, many admitted only children of key workers, or those deemed 'vulnerable'

for child protection reasons, and/or offered only part-time hours.

This repeated tendency to overlook non-mainstream settings in policy can be linked to wider theoretical debates around special education. The very existence of the term Special Educational Needs may involve a process of 'othering' certain children who are perceived to fall outside the remit of general legislation, policy and practice. It could also be attributed to 'ableism', where value is placed primarily on children who are perceived as belonging on a trajectory leading to economically active citizenship. Some may baulk, but what other conclusions should be drawn from ten months of persistent governmental neglect?

It's time we began to mean what we say. "All schools" needs to mean all schools. It should be routine practice for education contingency frameworks to account for all settings where education is delivered. Providing clarity and feasible planning for the settings which educate those with the most significant disabilities, working in close consultation with special school leaders, should be a government priority rather than an afterthought. Families of disabled children are placed under immense strain during lockdown and school places should be available to them, but special schools need well-planned support from government in order to deliver this. This will not happen whilst they remain a casual afterthought.

# Opinion

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

**The rush to catch up through tutoring and other flat-pack schemes is no substitute for schools designing and building their own cultures, writes Chris Knowles**

Thirty-two years ago, my first year of teaching was signed off by a local authority adviser who gave me professional development advice I've never forgotten. If it was up to them, my second year of teaching would have been taken up with varnishing the handles of the children's paintbrushes to prevent them from looking messy after a few uses.

Luckily, I've had better advice since, not least the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) that supported my first headship and provided the perfect antithesis to that early introduction to professional development. But my recent involvement in the NAHT's School Improvement Commission has provided me with an unparalleled opportunity to reflect on what had really made a difference in the schools I have striven to improve.

Far above all else, the most important factor in improving outcomes for pupils is having highly effective teachers. Highly effective leaders, therefore, need to provide teachers with the right support for them to improve within their context.

So far, so much better than varnishing paintbrush handles! But the commission's inquiry into post-Covid school improvement also led me to see a danger that has to be overcome. That danger is that we look for flat-pack solutions rather than bespoke ones by master craftspeople.

The flat-pack model is attractive, but in reality it is only a step removed from the "varnish your brushes" approach of my early days. It comes



CHRIS KIRKHAM-KNOWLES

Headteacher, Newby and Scalby Primary School

## School improvement doesn't come flat-packed

neatly packaged by designers who have focused on making the content fit in the box and reduced all waste in the production process. It is well marketed by companies with budgets specifically targeted at catching the eye of professionals with limited time to select the right solution.

The flat-pack solution comes

experience tell us, the flat-pack is by nature temporary. Rather than embed itself within the real context of the school, it asks the school to bend to its requirements. Its inevitable results are failure to deliver long-term improvements and a rush to find the next flat-pack.

Too much time and energy

“The flat-pack model is neatly packaged and well marketed

with the tools to do the job neatly integrated into ring-binders or online apps. It promises an immediate reward, a quick fix and safety in numbers. After all, like the Billy bookcase, everyone else has one exactly like it.

Unfortunately, as research and

has already been wasted on this approach. Following our ongoing Covid-enforced 'pause', our profession needs to insist that government allow and facilitate a 'master craftsman' model of improvement. Sadly, the rush to 'catch up' through tutoring and



other flat-pack schemes is likely to run counter to this. But what schools really need is the time to re-build their own cultures of high and deeply learned standards for all pupils.

What this means is that teachers and leaders alike should be treated like master craftspeople: provided with the best-honed tools and the autonomy to use their professionalism, commitment and collaboration with peers to explore new ways of getting the best from the raw materials. Master craftspeople have ownership of the process as well as the outcome and want to carve their name in the finished product with pride. So it should be for teachers and school leaders.

One of the best examples of this I've seen was in a school in which teachers themselves analysed pupil performance data to determine aspirational targets, established their own appraisal targets based on that analysis and then developed a bespoke professional development package to help them to meet their goals. This master craftsman approach resulted in deep-seated improvement where flat-packs had only provided a Formica veneer.

If the education system is going to truly deliver quality equitably to our richly diverse communities, improvements must be embedded deep within the fabric of its institutions. The post-Covid educational landscape may still seem distant, but waiting too long will lead us straight back to the just-in-time logistics that made the flat-pack so popular.

If we are ever to put the mass-manufactured Allen keys aside and rediscover the real tools of the trade, then we can't wait this period out by simply varnishing our paintbrush handles.

# Opinion

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

## Lockdown diaries – The 'holidays' 2020

**JONATHAN  
MOUNTSTEVENS**

Deputy headteacher, Beaumont School

Christmas is the season of joy, goodwill and merriment, but the 2020 version definitely did not live up to expectations, thanks in no small part to the Department for Education. Like many senior leaders in schools up and down the country, I barely felt like it was a holiday at all.

The bane of the first few days for me was contact tracing. I arrived home after breaking up on December 18 to the news that a student had tested positive, followed by a couple of hours checking seating plans and phoning parents to inform them that their child must go into self-isolation. The same thing happened again the following day, so it seemed almost fitting to be told that my own daughter would also have to self-isolate over Christmas as a result of a positive case in her primary school bubble.

The contact tracing continued for the first few days of the holiday, but new issues emerged as well. I was increasingly concerned about the lateral flow testing programme, for which

schools were being asked by the DfE to prepare over Christmas. Evidence was emerging about the lack of sensitivity of the tests, and it seemed very risky to allow close contacts of positive cases to remain in school on the strength of a negative result.

No adequate answers emerged from a DfE webinar which I attended on December 23, but I was somewhat reassured by the insistence that testing was optional for schools. Predictably enough, the secretary of state for education reneged on this commitment and made the programme compulsory a week or so later.

After a brief respite on Christmas Day itself, I tried to tackle the large backlog of work I needed to do. There was no peace, however, because on December 30, after the usual leaks, Gavin Williamson confirmed a further delay to the full opening of schools in January, albeit with very little clarity. He suggested teachers should not provide remote learning for non-exam year groups in the first week of term, which seemed crazy when



we'd already made plans to cater for these students.

Two conflicting sets of guidance from the DfE that evening didn't help matters. After much deliberation, my colleagues and I revised our plans and wrote emails to staff and parents to update them. I woke the following morning to a third version of the DfE guidance – different again – and we had to tweak our communications once more.

The real nadir came on the morning of December 31 when I realised too late that, distracted by Gavin Williamson's incoherence the previous evening, I'd forgotten to take out the bins. I am not proud of the fact, but I did shout a bit at this point and made my daughter cry. Sadly, Gavin Williamson did not take up my suggestion on Twitter that he should collect them, and the holiday did not get better either. I ended up carrying most of my backlog of work into the new term and worrying about the impact of potential primary school closures on my

family. These closures were duly confirmed by the prime minister on January 5. Well, at least plans to roll out a testing regime are now on the back burner.

Covid has had a devastating impact on society. It has cruelly taken many thousands of people from us, so my disappointing school holiday is trivial in comparison. But there is a serious point. Through insensitivity, indecision and incompetence, our political masters have forced school leaders to change tack frequently, undermined their decisions and left them stressed and exhausted at the start of a crucial term. With many hazards to navigate in the weeks and months ahead, young people will be depending on us and need us to be at our best. The cluster-farce of Christmas 2020 has done serious damage and will have impact.

On a lighter note, I did eventually manage to get rid of my bin bags at the delightful St Albans Household Waste Recycling Centre. At least one thing is right with the world.

## Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



## Educating for a Characterful Society

**Author:** James Arthur, Nicky Morgan and others

**Publisher:** Routledge

**Reviewer:** Stephen Lane, Pastoral Leader KS3, Lichfield Cathedral School

What are schools for? This deceptively simple question can generate fierce debate between those who assert that schools are academic institutions that should focus primarily on domain-specific curricular knowledge, and those who insist that schools should develop more generic skills.

For my part, I see this as something of a false dichotomy. In reality there is a plethora of perspectives that sit between these two poles and encompass elements of both. But at the heart of all this the question remains: what are schools for?

Ultimately, I believe the aim of schooling is pastoral; that what we strive to achieve is individual and societal wellbeing or, better still, *eudaimonia* – a word that is probably best translated as ‘flourishing’.

In this timely volume, Arthur and his co-authors present generally interesting and convincing accounts of their various perspectives on this, bringing together a range of potentially disparate ideas under the umbrella of ‘character’.

The book comprises essays from five figures acknowledged for their significant roles in putting character education firmly into the national discourse. James Arthur begins with some theoretical grounding and gives us a thorough overview of the work of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham. Nicky Morgan outlines the place of character education in schools, charting its rise to prominence in the work of the DfE and Ofsted. Julia Cleverdon gives an account of her work with various

iterations of the #iwill campaign, extolling the benefits of youth social action for individuals and communities. James O’Shaughnessy presents a brief history of character education in policy and its move from niche to mainstream. Finally, Anthony Seldon gives an amusing and touching biographical account of lessons he has learned about why character education is important.

While Seldon’s contribution is the most personally engaging, the most interesting and potentially useful chapter is probably O’Shaughnessy’s. This chapter is well grounded in the practicalities of school leadership and offers some ideas about what character education might actually look like in schools, citing his experience with Floreat and other specific examples too.

Morgan’s contribution gives a fairly convincing argument for the necessity of character education, with reference to research findings that show its positive impact on various measures. She also raises a note of concern about some manifestations of character education that risk being somewhat utilitarian.

This is a concern echoed in O’Shaughnessy’s chapter where he notes the effects of a target culture that rose during Tony Blair’s time in office and has not abated.

Cleverdon’s chapter on youth social action makes reference to some research findings as well as providing specific examples from practice; I particularly like her

account of a school that encouraged its students to see themselves as ‘Special Agents of Change’.

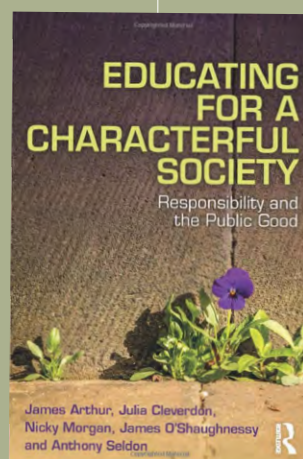
The book is predicated on the general assumption that character education, in its various guises, is A Good Thing. Yet, while I admire the significant commitment the contributors have each made in their careers to developing character education, it is a mistake, I think, to imagine that it is not contested. None of the authors gives any consideration of criticisms of character education.

In addition, while they do warn against utilitarianism, there are too many uncritical references to what employers are looking for, among them ‘resilience’ and ‘grit’ – potentially toxic ideas.

The blurb suggests this “could very well be the most important book you read all year”. I don’t think it really warrants that claim, but it is nonetheless an interesting and relevant read. I am particularly fond of the call for schooling to be seen as being about far more than examination results, and pleased to read in each of the chapters an appeal for schools to

encourage students to look beyond themselves, to participate in ways of being and thinking that aim to do good.

Sadly, the book does too little to account for why these appeals still need to be made. Unless and until that’s figured out, ‘the most important book’ on character education remains to be written.



# Reviews



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

@JMSREFLECT

## Certainties

@elucymay

A lovely piece by Elisabeth Bowling, whose writing I don't think I have discovered previously. In a time of great stress, confusion and uncertainty which is understandably leading to some friction in the teaching community, this piece is the perfect antidote. Bowling has started the year by focusing on the certainties that teachers can hold on to: that what we do matters, the honour that is working with children, and that we can make the best of remote learning. As she concludes, "Retrospectively, we'll be proud to be public sector workers". A short read that is perfect for getting into the right mindset for a new term and a new year, whatever the next few weeks throw at us.

## Improving Communication with Parents

@curricteamlead

Finding the time to stop and take stock of your practice, reflect on what isn't working and make improvements is always a challenge and I admire those who do this regularly. I am in awe of those who then find the time to share freely their

## TOP BLOGS of the week

reflections simply to support the wider education community. This piece is in that spirit. Before the pandemic this school's parent survey did not show the level of satisfaction with school communication they desired and so throughout lockdown and the return to school, they have been working to improve these. Here, Peter Foster shares some of the key strategies they have adopted, including the use of "video letters", a brilliant idea to support a wide range of families who struggle to understand or access school communication. It is no wonder that parents' "feelings about communication have dramatically improved" and it leaves them perfectly set up for the new restrictions.

## Cutting Workload – a couple of ideas

@adamboxer1

I am aware that I have recommended a disproportionate number of Boxer's blogs in this column, but they are just so useful. His strong grasp of which initiatives can actually instil meaningful improvements are built on a philosophy that cutting workload is fundamentally about "finding the things which have the smallest impact on student outcomes and, just, well...ditching them".

As ever, his advice is strongly practical and he briefly reviews 12 strategies for reducing workload, many of which could be implemented with relative ease by leaders at all levels.

## Lateral Flow Tests in Schools

@head\_teach

In this blog, headteacher Matthew Evans focuses on three key questions: whether the tests will reduce incidents of Covid, whether they will increase attendance, and whether the benefits are worth the costs in terms of resources. Although the decision about whether to implement lateral flow tests was taken out of headteachers' hands and is now moot for the foreseeable future, there is no doubt that a fully safe reopening will hinge upon their eventual deployment. In that sense the blog's information is still relevant and valuable, and in the meantime it stands as a model of research-informed, intelligent leadership, giving a powerful insight into some of the incredible pressures heads are currently under, the responsibilities they have and how they are approaching this burden with an eye to the safety of their community and the education of all children. As Evans concludes, "[There] are things I cannot change, but I can try to make the best out of yet another fine mess."

## An Idiot's Guide to the Philosophy of Education: Part 3

@JamesTheo

Finally for this week, something a little different. This guide (which contains links to parts 1 and 2) provides a brief introduction to educational philosophy. Over three blogs we meet Socrates, Locke, Rousseau, Montaigne, Dewey, Freire, Neill, Peters and Piaget ("ranked as the second most eminent psychologist of the 20th century, after Frasier Crane"). Each philosopher's views are briefly summarised by Theobald, who keeps his tongue firmly in his cheek and manages to educate and entertain in equal measures.

# Research

The Centre for Education and youth will review a research development each half term. Contact them @TheCFEY if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

## Could educational research be leading the profession astray?

**Baz Ramaiah, associate,  
Centre for Education and Youth**

There have been some pretty provocative article titles in the history of science. But few come close to John Ioannidis' 2005 essay "Why most published research findings are false".

The content is even more provocative than the title. Ioannidis uses probability theory and statistical modelling to argue that three everyday features of scientific practice undermine its ability to produce accurate and useful findings.

First, "questionable research practices" are ubiquitous in scientific research. Like any one in any job, scientists cut corners to hit their targets. And the one metric that matters for researchers is "number of articles published in high impact journals". To produce findings that get published in these journals, scientists engage in a wide range of methodological and statistical gymnastics to contort their results into a form that makes them publishable.

Second, there are profound issues with academic journals. Their publication policies tend to favour statistically significant findings with large effect sizes. That means that they are full of claims that particular social programmes or medical treatments are effective, but wholly devoid of any countervailing evidence to show why they might be ineffective. The net result is a scientific literature that is, at best, incomplete, and at worst, comprehensively biased.

Third, journals prefer exciting, novel findings rather than replications of studies that have already been published. This disincentivises scientists from replicating previous studies. With most studies in several disciplines (from molecular genetics to psychology) never having been replicated, entire



academic literatures could be composed of lucky one-off findings.

This reflexive practice of using science to study scientific practice and process is known as "metascience" and Ioannidis' 2005 paper is considered its founding document. Over the course of the past 15 years metascience has fortified itself into a scientific discipline in its own right, going on to expose even more problematic research and reporting practices. It has also helped re-engineer systems of reporting, publication and evaluation within some scientific disciplines to ensure that quality scientific research is produced.

What about educational research? While Ioannidis' paper is targeted at the natural sciences, recent work has shown that his findings generalise to our own field.

A recent survey study of nearly 1,500 educational researchers concluded that most academics in the field have engaged in research and reporting processes that misrepresent the validity of their results.

A sequence of studies over the course of the 2010s have shown that the major educational research journals are skewed towards publishing statistically significant results with large effect sizes while rejecting those that do not meet these criteria.

The field is also beset by replication bias. A 2014 systematic review found that only 0.13 per cent of articles published in the top 100 educational research journals are replications. To put that into context, the field of psychology was plunged into a "replication crisis" when its reproducibility index was found to be 1.1 per cent. What's more, the 2014 study found that of the few replication studies that were conducted within education, nearly half were unsuccessful.

While we may find these claims unsettling, there are steps that consumers of research can take to safeguard themselves against being led too far astray.

First, pay attention to publication bias estimates at the start of good metaanalyses. Funnel plots are the most common method used to generate these estimates. As a rule of thumb, a symmetrical distribution in a funnel plot means there's little publication bias in the literature. Anything other than that should prompt cautious consumption.

Second, we need to avoid enabling journal biases by sharing any negative findings or replication studies we come across. By bleat or tweet, you can resist the hegemony of positive over negative findings.

Initially controversial, Ioannidis' paper is now canonical. Educational research should follow the imperative of other research fields: look beyond the paper's iconoclasm and embrace an opportunity for evolution.



# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## MONDAY

When Prime minister Boris announced on Monday night that schools would close and that exams would also be cancelled, it was surprising news for most of us.

And that includes civil servants at the Department for Education who – just hours earlier – had reportedly been told in an all-staff meeting that there were no plans to close schools, and no plans to cancel exams.

\*\*\*

Johnson was quick to pledge “more devices to support remote education” when he announced partial closures on Monday night.

But how many extra devices on top of those already pledged will be made available? A grand total of zero, the DfE sheepishly confirmed on Wednesday.

The announcement this week actually amounts to little more than a hurrying-along of delivery, though that will no doubt be welcome in schools, with 45 per cent of heads reporting they have so far received less than 10 per cent of their expected number.

We are shocked to learn that once again there was little substance behind the soundbite.

\*\*\*

In a highly unusual move, the government actually published guidance on the new national lockdown less than an hour after it was

announced on Monday night.

This was good news for the general public, but less helpful for school leaders, who soon discovered when they clicked a link in the document to guidance on education that the destination documents were out of date.

Still, given the government changed its mind over school reopenings five times in five days, the fact they even managed to get the wider guidance out this week probably deserves some praise. If only we were in the business of giving praise for doing the absolute bare minimum.

## WEDNESDAY

Hedge fund manager Sir Paul Marshal, best-known in schools circles as the chair of the Education Policy Institute and a founder of ARK Schools, has found himself a new venture to fund.

Marshal has been named as one of the backers of fledgling news channel GB News.

The outlet is aiming to bring US-style news programming to the UK, and is chaired by former BBC presenter Andrew Neil.

Marshall was a backer of Brexit, a donor to Michael Gove's ill-fated 2016 Tory leadership campaign and is credited with having helped move the Liberal Democrats to the right after co-editing the Orange Book with then future schools minister David Laws, now EPI's executive chair.

\*\*\*

If you want a gauge of just how unexpected Gavin Williamson's announcement on Wednesday that parents will be able to report schools to Ofsted for their remote education provision was, look no further than the watchdog itself.

Week in Westminster understands Ofsted wasn't fully aware of its new role, and watchdog officials were “furious” when they found out.

They weren't the only ones. Much of Wednesday's statement came as news to the unions, despite the fact Gav often makes the point that they are regularly consulted on the government's plans.

## THURSDAY

Edenred, the firm that ran the national free school meal voucher scheme last year, was surprisingly sheepish this week when asked whether it would be in the driving seat again for the relaunch, which was announced by Williamson earlier this week.

Week in Westminster understands the company has been recruited to run the scheme again, so maybe it is just getting its ducks in a row before confirming anything.

But the lack of detail on the rollout is alarming, especially as the government has clearly known for weeks that partial school closures may once again be needed to stem the tide of the virus.



Department  
for Education



## School Teachers' Review Body Member - Chair

The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is an independent body which makes recommendations to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education on the pay and conditions of school teachers in England.

The STRB assesses evidence from Government and organisations representing schools and the teaching profession, and visits schools and local authorities to develop its understanding of issues facing teachers. In addition to providing recommendations on annual pay awards for teachers and school leaders, the STRB has been asked to report on a variety of matters in recent years, including moving toward a pay structure with higher starting and early career salaries and relatively flatter pay progression and providing additional guidance to schools through advisory pay points.

Further information on the STRB is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body)

The STRB is now seeking to fill a vacancy, and is looking to recruit a chair that demonstrates the following criteria:

- Expertise of providing strong leadership at a senior level, including chairing groups with diverse skills and experience to deliver consensus.
- A detailed knowledge and understanding of pay, remuneration, performance management, labour market and reward issues and a strong understanding of the policy, financial and operational constraints that impact on remuneration decisions, especially in the public sector.
- Expertise in analysing and interpreting detailed information such as statistical and economic data and information on legal, policy and HR matters and to draw appropriate conclusions.
- Able to communicate effectively and command the respect of others quickly, to challenge and engage courteously particularly those of opposing views, facilitating agreement across a wide range of perspectives and attitudes.

### Appointment

This position will provide an influential and intellectually stimulating challenge for the right individual, who will contribute to the recruitment, retention and motivation of an effective teacher workforce. As a member of the STRB you will bring your own expertise, alongside a high degree of analytical ability, strong communication skills and, ideally, an appreciation of public sector reward issues.

The time commitment for this position is approximately 30 days per year, for which an attendance allowance of £350 per day is payable, no additional fee is paid for any time spent in preparation or travelling. This is a ministerial appointment and will initially be for up to three years.

**The closing date for applications is: 15 January 2021, 12pm**

Please visit the public appointments website for full details of this vacancy and information on how to apply, available at:  
<https://bit.ly/STRBChair>

### You may also be interested in:

The STRB are seeking to fill an additional vacancy for a board member. If you are interested in also applying for this role, then further details can be found here: <https://bit.ly/STRBBoardMember>



Department  
for Education



## School Teachers' Review Body Member – Economist

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The STRB is now seeking to fill a vacancy, and is looking to recruit an economist that demonstrates the following criteria:

- A strong track record of professional experience requiring specialist expertise in economics at a senior level
- The ability to analyse and interpret a large amount of complex and sensitive information, clearly communicate economic analysis to a non-specialist audience and demonstrate a working knowledge of the impact of any potential decisions on the teacher workforce.
- An understanding of pay, remuneration and reward issues and an appreciation of the policy, financial and operational constraints that impact on remuneration decisions.
- An ability to communicate effectively in collective decision making, assessing/debating conflicting opinions across a wide range of perspectives and attitudes to form a coherent set of recommendations.

It is desirable if candidates also have:

- A detailed knowledge and understanding of labour market economics, and/or the economics of education.

### Appointment

This position will provide an influential and intellectually stimulating challenge for the right individual, who will contribute to the recruitment, retention and motivation of an effective teacher workforce. As a member of the STRB you will bring your own expertise, alongside a high degree of analytical ability, strong communication skills and, ideally, an appreciation of public sector reward issues.

The time commitment for this position is approximately 25 days per year, for which an attendance allowance of £300 per day is payable, no additional fee is paid for any time spent in preparation or travelling. This is a ministerial appointment and will initially be for up to three years.

**The closing date for applications is: 15 January 2021, 12pm**

Please visit the public appointments website for full details of this vacancy and information on how to apply, available at:  
<https://bit.ly/STRBEconomist>

### You may also be interested in:

The STRB are seeking to fill additional vacancies for a chair and board member. If you are interested in also applying for either of these roles, then further details can be found here:

Chair vacancy – <https://bit.ly/STRBChair>

Board member – <https://bit.ly/STRBBoardMember>



Department  
for Education



## School Teachers' Review Body - Board Member

The School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) is an independent body which makes recommendations to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education on the pay and conditions of school teachers in England.

The STRB assesses evidence from Government and organisations representing schools and the teaching profession, and visits schools and local authorities to develop its understanding of issues facing teachers. In addition to providing recommendations on annual pay awards for teachers and school leaders, the STRB has been asked to report on a variety of matters in recent years, including moving toward a pay structure with higher starting and early career salaries and relatively flatter pay progression and providing additional guidance to schools through advisory pay points.

Further information on the STRB is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/school-teachers-review-body)

The STRB is now seeking to fill a vacancy, and is looking to recruit a board member that demonstrates the following criteria:

- A strong track record of providing effective leadership at a senior level.
- A good knowledge and understanding of pay, remuneration, performance management, labour market and reward issues and a strong understanding of the policy, financial and operational constraints that impact on remuneration decisions.
- The ability to analyse and interpret a large amount of complex and sensitive information, providing insight and a working knowledge over the impact of any potential decisions on the workforce.
- An ability to communicate effectively in collective decision making, assessing/debating conflicting opinions across a wide range of perspectives and attitudes to form a coherent set of recommendations.

### Appointment

This position will provide an influential and intellectually stimulating challenge for the right individual, who will contribute to the recruitment, retention and motivation of an effective teacher workforce. As a member of the STRB you will bring your own expertise, alongside a high degree of analytical ability, strong communication skills and, ideally, an appreciation of public sector reward issues.

The time commitment for this position is approximately 25 days per year, for which an attendance allowance of £300 per day is payable, no additional fee is paid for any time spent in preparation or travelling. This is a ministerial appointment and will initially be for up to three years.

**The closing date for applications is: 15 January 2021, 12pm**

Please visit the public appointments website for full details of this vacancy and information on how to apply, available at <https://bit.ly/STRBBoardMember>

### You may also be interested in:

The STRB are seeking to fill additional vacancy of chair. If you are interested in also applying for this role, then further details can be found here <https://bit.ly/STRBChair>

## Executive Director of Learning (Principal)

Hours: Full time role

Start date: Easter 2021 or September 2021

Salary: Negotiable, circa L25-L31 dependent on experience, plus performance bonus

Office base: Livingstone Academy Bournemouth



**LIVINGSTONE  
ACADEMY  
BOURNEMOUTH**  
an Aspirations Academy

The Executive Director of Learning (EDoL) will lead this new school. This person would be performing the role of the Principal but without the full range of responsibilities, enabling a full focus on learning. This role would focus primarily on the provision of high-quality teaching and learning, overseeing the work of the Director of Digital Curriculum and Innovation (responsibility for the curriculum) and the Head of Secondary and Head of Primary (both would be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school). The regional CEO and Aspirations central team will support the EDoL with the finance, premises and IT management of the school.

Learn more about Livingstone Academy at [www.livingstone-aspirations.org](http://www.livingstone-aspirations.org)

If you would like to discuss the Trust's vision for this role before applying, please contact Steve Kenning, Managing Director, at [stevekenning@aspirationsacademies.org](mailto:stevekenning@aspirationsacademies.org) or on 07753 496548.

Please complete the online application form and your supporting statement, setting out your vision for education in the 21st century to: [jobs@aspirationsacademies.org](mailto:jobs@aspirationsacademies.org)

Closing date for applications is **4pm on Monday 25th January 2021**.

Interviews due to take place on **Thursday 4th February 2021**.



## HEADTEACHER

**Kingsley Primary School**

Full time, Permanent

Pay Scale: Leadership ISR (group 3)

Points: Headteacher: L12 - L24

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

**InMAT is looking to recruit someone who:**

- has successful experience at Head Teacher level or is looking to take the next step in their career
- shows a deep understanding of learning and is committed to developing quality first teaching
- has the skills to lead, improve and sustain academic achievement
- is able to build effective partnerships with all stakeholders
- is driven, ambitious and enthusiastic

**Visits: Week commencing 25th Jan 2021**

**Closing date - Monday 1st February 2021 at 12pm**

**Interview date: 8th or 9th Feb 2021**

Please contact Beverley Walker on 01604 434600 / [admin@inmat.org.uk](mailto:admin@inmat.org.uk) to book a visit or obtain an application pack.

For more information see our website [www.inmat.org.uk](http://www.inmat.org.uk)



## We're making a difference, can you? Principal Designate, Liverpool

Join an outstanding Trust as we expand our reach into the North West. This is a unique opportunity for a visionary leader to head up our first academy in Liverpool and make a difference where it matters most.

Dixons Academies is a high-performing Trust currently serving 12 schools across Bradford and Leeds. It offers a rich curriculum and academically rigorous education to some of the North's most deprived communities. Having doubled in size over the past five years, we have exciting plans to double again, adding hubs in Liverpool and Manchester. In collaboration with the existing Governing Body, we are seeking to appoint a Headteacher of Fazakerley High School from Easter 2021, to become Principal of the Academy when the school joins our Trust a few months later.

**Full details on our jobs portal - visit  
[www.dixonsat.com/join/jobs](http://www.dixonsat.com/join/jobs) and search by job title.**



## Deeping St James Community Primary School

### Role: Headteacher

**Location:** Deeping St James, Lincolnshire

**Number of Pupils:** 212

**Contract term:** Permanent

**Salary Range:** L13-19

**Contract type:** Full time

**Commencing:** 19th April 2021

#### Chair of Governors Message:

We are incredibly proud of our school and wish to appoint an enthusiastic, inspirational and motivated Headteacher from April 2021 who will lead our thriving school into its next stage of success. We are a warm, welcoming and friendly school where pupils are passionate about learning, hardworking and well-behaved, with staff who are dedicated and fully embrace our school's ethos. The ideal candidate will share our school's values, nurture positive relationships and lead by example.

#### We can offer:

- Passionate and committed teaching and support staff who value professional development
- The opportunity to work with wonderful, enthusiastic children who are committed to their learning
- A well-resourced, interactive learning environment to enable children to be the best they can be
- A forward-thinking, positive and supportive governing body
- An active Friends of the School Association with very supportive parents
- A supportive and innovative network of local primary school partners.

#### The ideal candidate should possess:

- A clear vision of excellence in primary education with the ability to think strategically
- The highest expectations for pupil attainment, personal

development and welfare

- A track record of being an excellent classroom practitioner
- Excellent leadership skills with proven evidence of understanding and embedding new initiatives to develop and enhance the curriculum
- An understanding of effective management and the ability to develop and empower a team of highly motivated, passionate and dedicated staff
- An openness to the advice and guidance of others
- A desire to develop and nurture strong working relationships with pupils, staff, families and the wider school community.

We hope that you will apply for the opportunity to bring your talents, drive and compassion to DSJ School. If your application is successful, the Governing Body and the entire school community stands ready to support your efforts and do everything possible to help you succeed.

Our school is committed to safeguarding and appointments will be subject to satisfactory Enhance DBS clearance and other significant safeguarding checks. Deeping St James Community Primary School is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

We warmly invite you to visit our school. To arrange a visit please contact our school office by emailing [marcelle.russell@dsj.school](mailto:marcelle.russell@dsj.school) or calling 01778 342314.

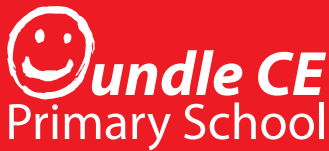
To apply, please complete an application form together with a covering letter outlining why you would like the post and how you would continue to develop and enhance the practices at the school. Application packs are available from the school office or on the school website.

**Tel:** 01778 342314

**E-Mail:** [marcelle.Russell@dsj.school](mailto:marcelle.Russell@dsj.school)

Closing date for applications is **12 noon on Wednesday 13th January 2021**

Interviews will take place on **Friday 22nd January 2021**



## 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:** Monday 11th January 2021 at 12:00pm

**Interview Date:** 18th/19th January 2021

**Start Date:** 12th April 2021 or 31st August 2021

See the school website listing for more information



**St Cecilia's**  
R. C. High School



## HEADTEACHER

**Required from: September 2021**

**Salary Range: L25 to L31 (£76,141 to £87,313)**

The Governors of St Cecilia's RC High School are seeking to appoint a well-qualified, ambitious and inspirational Headteacher who will lead the school on the next stage of its journey.

The school is a relatively small Voluntary Aided Catholic High School set in Lancashire's beautiful Ribble Valley with 465 pupils currently on roll.

Since 2015, and the appointment of the current Headteacher, the school has undergone significant improvement and is now the first-choice school for the Catholic community.

It was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in January 2016, and 'Outstanding' in 2017 during its Section 48 inspection. A highlight in October 2019 was being judged 'Good' again by Ofsted under the new EIF.

The significant improvements see school oversubscribed in Key Stage 3 and part of the LA's expansion programme.

There has been a rolling programme of building upgrades for the past six years to the tune of several million pounds. The programme will continue again in January 2021 with another series of building improvements.

School has also been successful in gaining recent awards of Lancashire Secondary Sports School of the Year and Preston Secondary Sports School of the year.

We also play an active part in the local community by attending and supporting the local agricultural show, Longridge Field Day, Longridge Town Council as well as local churches.

The successful candidate will be a practising Catholic, fully committed to developing and enriching the mission of our school. The person will have a vision, enthusiasm and ability to motivate others and a commitment to developing the ethos and successes of our school.

This is an exciting time to join school.

**For more information please contact us on 01772 783074 or visit our website [www.st-cecilias.co.uk](http://www.st-cecilias.co.uk)**