

SCHOOLS WEEK

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



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Unlocking schools: Tentative date, but no proper plans



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Corona bubbles beat Carillion rubble



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Special school staff get jobs as councils seize vaccine initiative

- 'Real momentum' as at least 65 LAs vaccinate SEND workers
- Staff classed as frontline carers, while others get leftover supply
- But calls for 'consistent' approach over postcode lottery fears

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Meet the news team



John Dickens
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Laura McInerney
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

@MISS_MCINERNEY
LAURA.MCINERNEY@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



JL Dutaut
COMMISSIONING EDITOR

@DUTAUT
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



Jess Staufenberg
COMMISSIONING EDITOR

@STAUFENBERGJ
JESS.STAUFBERG@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Freddie Whittaker
CHIEF REPORTER

@FCDWHITTAKER
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



Samantha Booth
SENIOR REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOTH
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLSWEEK.CO.UK



James Carr
SENIOR REPORTER

@JAMESCARR_93
JAMES.CARR@LSECT.COM



Nicky Phillips
HEAD DESIGNER

@GELVETICA
NICKY.PHILLIPS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Shane Mann
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

THE TEAM Designer: Simon Kay | Sales team leader: Bridget Stockdalew | Sales executive: Clare Halliday | PA to managing director: Victoria Boyle

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Vax on. Vax off: the week in special schools



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Councils seize initiative to vaccinate special school staff

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Thousands of special school staff are being offered the Covid-19 vaccine as councils include them in the priority roll-out or offer them leftover supplies, a Schools Week investigation has found.

While most teachers and school staff are not prioritised for jabs, more than 65 local authorities across England are believed to be including special school workers in their roll-outs.

Their approaches appear to vary, however, with some councils including special school staff in the health and social care priority groups. Other councils are using up leftover supplies.

Dominic Wall, a special school headteacher who is part of the Medicine in Specialist Schools group, said giving jabs to special school staff “should be a consistent approach across all special school settings where there are vulnerable children”.

He added: “If it’s the right thing to do in some areas, we can’t really understand why it wouldn’t be in areas that haven’t yet got up to speed. What I’d like is a really clear message that gets the stance quickly communicated.”

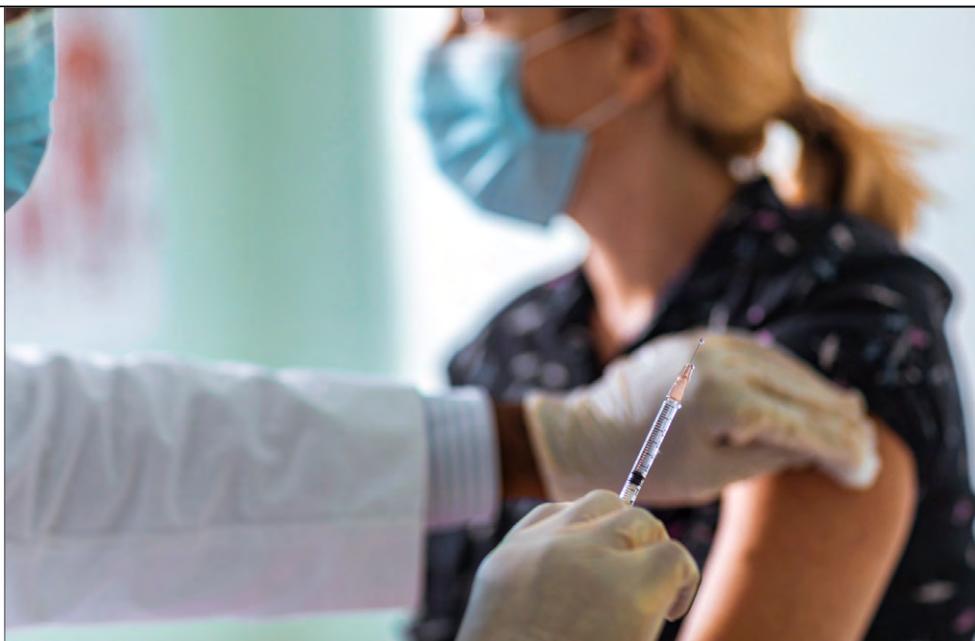
Vaccines are currently being issued to the top four priority groups identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). These are care home residents and carers, frontline health and social care workers, all those over 70 years old and clinically extremely vulnerable people.

Public health experts have backed calls to include special school staff in this first priority phase. Dr Jenny Harries, deputy chief medical officer, told MPS this month: “Anybody providing direct care in a clinical capacity, which I know happens in some educational settings, would be included within the health and social care staff group.”

A Public Health England spokesperson told Schools Week last night that “staff in some schools for clinically vulnerable children would fit the JCVI criteria of frontline care”.

In Norfolk, 1,900 staff across 13 special schools, including independent special schools, have been offered the jab as part of the health and social care workforce.

Sara Tough, Norfolk council’s executive



director of children’s services, said this was because “many staff will have to administer personal care and administer medication. There will also be children in special schools who have medical needs that put them at greater risk of infection.”

In Suffolk, staff at five settings where the role includes regular face-to-face contact with children with severe or profound disabilities have been offered the vaccine. A council spokesperson said this was because “they provide day-to-day care for clinically vulnerable children, putting themselves and the children at increased risk of exposure to coronavirus”.

In Newcastle, eight special schools and 17 SEN additional resourced provisions have been offered the jab while, in Tameside, staff were offered leftover doses of the Pfizer vaccine at short notice as it has to be used up quickly. Surplus supplies were also offered to special school staff in Lewisham.

Special school leaders told Schools Week they know of staff in 65 different council areas who have been offered jabs.

Wall said: “We are not trying to queue jump, we are really specifically saying it’s because of the vulnerability of the children we look after.”

The JCVI has advised that the vaccine programme should involve “flexibility” in deployment at a local level. This should be done with “due attention” to mitigating health inequalities, vaccine product storage, exceptional individual circumstances and

availability of suitable approved vaccines.

The NHS’s standard operating procedure says the local authority director of adult social services should have “ultimate responsibility” for identifying eligible social care workers.

This should be “underlined by the principal aim of achieving high rates of vaccination among frontline social care workers who provide care closely and regularly with those who are clinically vulnerable to Covid. This will require a consistent interpretation.”

The JCVI has identified children most at risk of coronavirus as those of any age who are clinically extremely vulnerable or who are aged 16 and over and at a greater risk of disease or mortality because of underlying health conditions. Many such pupils will be in special schools.

Graham Quinn, chief executive of the New Bridge Multi Academy Trust and chair of Special Schools Voice, said “local authorities and commissioners seem to be taking a much more pragmatic view now than they were”.

He added: “There’s a real momentum and understanding that our children are some of the children most at risk”.

The government is now facing calls for clarity. Schools minister Nick Gibb said this week that it would be “making the case” for special school staff to be prioritised in the next phase of the vaccine roll-out.

The Tony Blair Institute called for leftover supplies to be used to vaccinate key workers.

Speed read

What (little) we know about plan to reopen schools

The government set out an outline of its plan to reopen schools this week, but with few details. Here is what we know so far...

1 HOPE FOR MARCH 8 RETURN

Boris Johnson told Parliament on Wednesday that he hoped it would be “safe to begin the reopening of schools from Monday March 8”.

However, this is dependent on the government reaching its target of vaccinating the four most vulnerable groups of people by February 15.

The original target of reopening after February half term was “not possible”, the prime minister said, adding that we “do not yet have enough data to know exactly how soon it will be safe to reopen our society and economy”.

Johnson later told the Downing Street press briefing that March 8 was “the earliest that we think it is sensible to set for schools to go back”.

2 ‘ALL’ PUPILS TO RETURN, IF POSSIBLE

There has been talk of the potential for a staggered return of pupils, both by year groups and region. But Johnson indicated during the press briefing that he wanted to see “all” school pupils return at the same time.

Schools Week understands the government is hoping that scientific advice will support the return of all year groups. If it does not, ministers are understood to favour the return of exam pupils first. Primaries are also likely to be a priority.

But rotas aren’t favoured. Schools minister Nick Gibb told the Commons on Tuesday that rotas were “difficult for secondary schools to implement at the same time as providing full-time education for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers”.

More details will be set out in the government’s “plan for leaving lockdown”, due out in mid-February. The Department for Education has said it will keep its promise to provide two weeks’ notice before reopening.

3 £300M ‘NEW MONEY’ FOR CATCH-UP

Ministers promised to provide a “programme of catch-up over the next financial year” – with a further £300 million of new money for tutoring. The government will also collaborate with the education sector to develop “specific initiatives for summer schools and a Covid premium to support catch-up”.

Schools Week asked for further details, but received none.

Johnson told the Commons on Wednesday that the government would continue to fund vouchers or food parcels for pupils eligible for free school meals who are at home. However, vouchers will not be extended to cover the half-term break. Instead the government is pointing people to its £170 million Covid winter grant scheme for local authorities.

4 TESTING TO CONTINUE FOR THOSE ON SITE

All secondary schools “will be expected to test their students as they return to school”.

This will involve two lateral flow tests, three to five days apart, “to help identify and isolate asymptomatic students before they circulate in the school/college community”.

Staff in primary and secondary schools will also continue to have access to two tests per week.

However testing does not have to be run over the half-term.

5 SCHOOLS FULLY CLOSED FOR HALF-TERM, BUT STAFF NEEDED FOR CONTACT TRACING

In an email seen by *Schools Week*, the DfE confirmed that schools would “close as usual” during next month’s half-term, including to vulnerable and key-worker children. During the last lockdown, schools stayed open to these pupils during holidays.

But staff will have to be on-call during the holidays for contact tracing purposes.

If pupils or staff test positive, having developed symptoms more than 48 hours since being in school, then schools are not required to take any action. However, where symptoms were developed within 48 hours, the school is “asked to assist in identifying close contacts and advising self-isolation, as the individual may have been infectious while in school”.

The DfE suggested that staff “assuming responsibility for contact tracing during half-term can be offered equivalent time off at an agreed point during term time”.



News

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Learning loss 'wider than thought', with disadvantaged worst hit

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Disadvantaged primary school pupils are seven months behind their peers, according to the initial findings of a study which warns that the learning gap due to Covid is "wider than earlier estimates".

Year 2 pupils overall are also two months behind in reading and maths compared with previous cohorts, an Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) report has revealed in one of the first comprehensive studies into the Covid learning loss.

It found that there was a "large and concerning attainment gap" of seven months between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in reading and maths.

The calculated learning gap for disadvantaged pupils must however be treated carefully due to the unreliability of conversion methods and the "inherent uncertainty" in reading and maths ages, the report warned.

But its authors admitted that the disadvantage gap was "wider than earlier estimates", and "will likely be further



exacerbated" because of school closures in 2021.

Overall, the performance of six and seven-year-olds in the autumn term of 2020 was two months behind the 2017 cohort from the same period, according to the analysis of 5,900 pupils in 168 schools.

The report, based on data collected by the National Foundation for Educational Research, follows the government award of a contract to help measure the extent of lockdown learning losses in September.

An analysis in July showed the attainment gap between primary pupils had widened by 52 per cent. That study suggests younger pupils have been the worst hit by school closures.

Meanwhile another study from October said that new year 7 pupils were 22 months behind where they should have been.

However, while year 7 pupils are targeted in the government's laptop roll-out scheme, year 1 and 2 pupils have not been allocated devices, with schools only able to place orders for disadvantaged pupils from years 3 to 11.

At the same time, government guidance states that schools should provide key stage 1 pupils with a minimum of three hours of remote education every day, including live or recorded lessons.

The EEF study also unearthed the worrying finding that "a very large number of pupils were unable to engage effectively with the tests".

In maths, this meant that a higher than expected proportion of pupils (3.1 per cent, or 187 pupils) scored fewer than five marks on the test. In reading, it meant that a higher than expected proportion (5.2 per cent, or 307 pupils) scored fewer than two marks.

Professor Becky Francis, chief executive of the EEF, said the new research "offers compelling evidence of what we have feared since schools were closed [...] that there will be a large negative impact on learning, with disadvantaged pupils suffering the most".

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Secondary staff more likely to die from Covid

More than 180 deaths of school staff last year were Covid-related, with secondary teachers and lunchtime and school crossing supervisors more likely to die than the population at large.

New Office for National Statistics data shows there were 182 deaths involving Covid among those in school-based occupations between March 9 and December 28, 2020. These included 128 women and 54 men.

Fifty-two of those who died were secondary school teachers – 29 men and 23 women - equating to a death rate of 39.2 deaths per 100,000 men and 21.2 deaths per 100,000 women.

These rates were higher than those seen nationally – 31.4 and 16.8 deaths per 100,000 among men and women respectively, but the ONS said the differences were "not statistically significant".

Women working as midday or crossing supervisors were also more likely to die from Covid, with a death rate of 19.2 per 100,000.

Forty-two teaching assistants died, 37 of them women. The Covid-related death rate among female teaching assistants was 15 per 100,000, slightly lower than the rate among women in the general population.

The number of Covid-related deaths of those with school-related occupations rises to 511 if over-65s are included. However, the ONS said it did not include these in its main analysis to avoid the accidental inclusion of retirees.

The data comes as debate grows over whether school staff are more likely to catch Covid-19 than other professions.

Recent analysis of absence data by the National Education Union suggested infection rates among school staff

were "much higher" than the general population.

But Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, the government's deputy chief medical officer, told a Downing St briefing on Wednesday there was no "clear signal" of a "markedly increased rate of infection or mortality in teachers" in national data.

Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the figures were "grim", but warned against jumping to conclusions "about the relative risks of different workplaces".

"What we do know is that, when schools are fully open, education staff are asked to work in environments that are inherently busy and crowded. To give them reassurance, and to minimise the disruption to education, it is vital that they are prioritised for vaccination as soon as possible."

Investigation

Why the £400m laptop roll-out is crashing

JESS STAUFENBERG & JAMES CARR
@SCHOOLSWEEK

An “amazing achievement”. That’s how Nick Gibb, the long-time schools minister, describes the progress of his department’s £400 million scheme to deliver laptops to disadvantaged children.

He told MPs the delivery of 876,000 laptops, since the scheme launched in April last year, was an “amazing logistical exercise” amid a “demanding global market”.

But headteachers say too many pupils still do not have adequate devices as old tech starts to fail and live lessons mean laptops and phones can no longer be shared by several children in a household.

A new digital divide is also opening up as larger academy trusts use their financial might to purchase laptops, while smaller schools wait for government handouts.

So, what’s going wrong? *Schools Week* investigates...

Live lessons up demand

A Sutton Trust study published last week found 47 per cent of state schools had only been able to supply, at best, half their pupils with laptops, with two thirds of senior leaders having to “source IT equipment for disadvantaged pupils themselves”.

Before the pandemic, Ofcom estimated that 9 per cent of children – between 1.1 and 1.8 million – did not have access to a laptop, desktop or tablet at home.

The Department for Education has now delivered 876,013 devices. If we take the median number of that Ofcom statistic – 1.45 million – the DfE has delivered 60 per cent of the laptops needed.

But an Ofsted study this week found schools had gone “out of their way” to ensure pupils had devices, including leaning on local businesses and using Covid catch-up cash.

There are also scores of campaigns – such as by the *Daily Mail* and *The Mirror* – to provide devices, so why is the shortfall not plugged?

Simone Vibert, a senior policy analyst at the Children’s Commissioner



Dominic Norrish



Office, said that the gaps were filled for pupils in need in the first lockdown, but schools soon realised there were many more who still needed access.

Fiona Chapman, the executive principal at Ark Dickens and Ark Charter schools in Portsmouth, said pupils needing devices came from “quite unusual corners”.

“Some families on pupil premium have access to every device they need. It’s been about speaking to each and every family.”

School leaders also say the DfE’s use of disadvantaged pupil numbers for allocating devices did not always reflect areas of need.

As revealed by *Schools Week*, the government assumed schools had as many as 282 laptops each in its calculation to decide how many additional free devices they would get.

Ofcom’s estimate only covers children “without home access”, rather than those without individual access, meaning that figure is likely to be much higher.

A shift to live online lessons as schools boost their remote education in the new lockdown is also increasing demand.

“Most children now have a diet of multiple timetabled lessons during the day, which is creating demand for more individual devices in one family,” said Dominic Norrish, United Learning’s chief operating officer.

Cheaper devices, such as tablets, which were adequate in



Julian Wood

the first lockdown also did not have the keyboards and cameras needed for live lessons, he said.

Bill Lord, the head of Long Sutton County Primary in Lincolnshire, said some families’ technology was beginning to fail.

“We are now hearing of family laptops ceasing to work under the strain of three or four hours of teams calls [...] and they simply do not have the financial ability to replace them.”

Four families faced this problem this week, but only one would qualify for a DfE laptop, he said. This was because the DfE allocated devices only to year 3 pupils and above, despite insisting pupils in years 1 and 2 must have at least three hours of remote education every day.

Julian Wood, the deputy head of Wybourn Community Primary in Sheffield, said a “patronising” attitude towards the youngest learners left his school having to make up the shortfall.

‘It shows how slow the government has been’

Many schools and trusts were complimentary about the number of devices allocated to them and were sympathetic to the logistical challenge faced by the DfE.

In October, the government slashed schools’ allocations to laptops by 80 per cent so that its stock would last longer, citing a global shortage.

United Learning noted the shortage

Continued on next page

Investigation



in the first lockdown as demand rocketed and US tariffs on China's exports slowed production.

But Gemma Abbott, a legal director at the Good Law Project, said: "It's ten months later and hundreds of thousands of children still don't have access. Why wasn't this resolved in the summer? It's catastrophic and shows how painfully slow the government has been".

Delivery has also been varied. Councils in the north east, one of the worst hit regions in the pandemic, received the highest proportion of laptops, analysis of government data by Schools Week found. The south east, a recent hotspot, received far fewer (see table).

Meanwhile the UK "lags significantly behind our European cousins" for online learning, said Julian Drinkall, the chief executive of Academies Enterprise Trust.

He was referring to countries such as Estonia, where digital learning platforms were in widespread use well before the pandemic, and Finland, which has a national online library for education resources.

Schools Week was unable to find comparative data on laptops to compare England's progress against other countries.

Scrutiny has now turned to the laptop suppliers.

The Good Law Project wants to know why Computacenter, whose founder Sir Philip Hulme is a Conservative Party donor, was awarded a £198 million contract to deliver laptops. Abbott said that "questions around cronyism" needed to be answered.

In November, the government brought two more suppliers onboard to help with supply, XMA, based in Nottingham, and SCC, based in Birmingham.

SCC is owned by the Rigby Group, which has donated more than £100,000 to the Conservative Party in recent years. Schools Week approached all three companies for comment.

Larger trusts pull ahead

But any global shortage has passed by the country's largest academy trusts who have bought huge numbers of laptops.

Academies Enterprise Trust has spent £2.93 million, using six suppliers – more than the DfE.

Similarly, United Learning has spent more than £2 million on devices and wifi, buying 55 per cent of its 20,000 devices. Ark has received 5,500 devices from the DfE, but has distributed 12,000, in part through match funding received from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.



Natalie Perera

DfE devices delivered to councils by region

REGION	DEVICES DELIVERED TO COUNCILS BY 26 JAN	PUPILS IN LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOLS IN 2019-20	PROPORTION OF PUPILS GIVEN DEVICES
North East	29,114	194,829	14.9
West Midlands	53,465	401,526	13.3
London	91,264	719,696	12.7
Yorkshire and the Humber	43,808	349,573	12.5
North West	88,825	724,588	12.3
East Midlands	27,967	248,144	11.3
South West	28,429	252,795	11.2
East of England	29,251	334,758	8.7
South East	57,584	666,461	8.6

But smaller schools have had to rely on the DfE's allocation and donations from parents.

Carla Ferla, the head of Peareswood Primary in south London, said her school has received 60 devices - with 20 arriving this week - for an allocation of 72.

For pupils who are still waiting, the school has "signed up to a charity where people can donate" and paper packs will also be used.

Meanwhile, Colebourne Primary in Birmingham has entered a £130,000 three-year leasing deal to supply 300 iPads as it was the "only option" to ensure all pupils had a device. Parents will cover about £40,000 of the costs.

'Low spec' laptops and Russian malware

Concerns have also been raised over the quality of some of the DfE's devices, particularly the GeoBook IE, which comes with 4GB of RAM memory and 64GB of built-in storage.

A secondary school IT support worker, who wished to remain anonymous, said the built-in storage wasn't big enough to hold all the software necessary for home learning. The school opted to leave some programs out to get 154 of the devices set up.

"It is the cheapest laptop you can ever buy with the lowest priority of performance," they added.

According to the Good Law Project, 90 GeoBooks at a school in Bradford were found to contain Gamarue.I malware, which the school said was contacting Russian servers.

A Yorkshire secondary asked parents this month if pupils could access lessons through their gaming devices as the laptops sent by the DfE were of such "a low specification that we were unable to install the necessary programs for students to access their work from home".

When ordering, schools can pick between receiving blank devices or models preloaded with software.

Victoria Campling, the head of St Aidan's Catholic Primary in Essex, ordered three blank GeoBooks in November. But a lack of on-site technical support meant they were not set up for pupils until January – with one laptop already returned due to a fault.

The DfE says under one per cent of laptops have been returned. All devices meet "minimum specifications".

Would it be better to go to Currys?

Of the 1.3 million promised laptops, 423,000 are still to be delivered.

The DfE has refused to set a date for when it will reach the target, but if the current pace of 75,000 a week is maintained, schools face up to a six-week wait. The last of the laptops would be delivered in the week before March 8, when it is hoped schools will reopen.

Natalie Perera, the chief executive of the Education Policy Institute think tank, said because of the huge disparities in access to digital devices, the DfE "should consider whether it is feasible to release funds to schools".

Robert Halfon, chair of the Commons education select committee, said this month that vouchers should have been given to heads to "go down to the local Currys and buy Chromebooks for £200".

A live expert on Currys website told us while there had been shortages at the outbreak of the pandemic in March, it would have "no problem" delivering 50 Chromebooks to a school within a week of ordering.

But Jonathan Simons, a director at Public First, said the DfE was "too far down the road" to change direction. It's now bought the remaining laptops and is waiting on delivery.

A spokesperson said the department was "acutely aware of the additional challenges faced by disadvantaged children", with deliveries "continuing at pace".

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News

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DfE says sorry for Covid variant 'mistake'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The Department for Education knew about the highly infectious new Covid variant before ordering Greenwich council to rescind its request for schools to close early for Christmas, its most senior civil servant has admitted.

Susan Acland-Hood, the DfE's permanent secretary, has written to Robert Halfon, the chair of the education select committee, to apologise for what she described as a "mistake" during evidence on January 13.

Acland-Hood told MPs at the hearing that the department was not "aware of the announcement on the new variant" when the direction was issued, despite a statement in parliament on the strain more than an hour beforehand.

The government faced criticism last month after it used emergency powers under coronavirus legislation to order Greenwich to retract its request that schools in the south London borough close early after case rates soared.

The direction was issued at 4.54pm on December 14. At 3.38pm that day, Matthew Hancock, the health secretary, had warned the House of Commons about the new variant, which was particularly prevalent in the south east.

Questioned earlier this month about the events leading up to the direction, Acland-Hood said she believed the health secretary's statement was made the following day.

But she was corrected at the time by Halfon, who had been alerted to the timeline of events by *Schools Week*.

In her letter, Acland-Hood said Halfon was "of course quite correct... It was the public press briefing on the new variant which was made on Tuesday December 15. I apologise for making this mistake during the session."

She acknowledged that her department "became aware of the existence of the new variant of Covid-19 when the health secretary made his oral statement to the House of Commons", which meant it knew about the strain when it issued the order.

But she said details on the variant were



"limited", and the statement "did not propose or suggest that there be a change of policy on education".

"Discussions on the continuity direction to Greenwich took place during December 14, and it was issued after the health secretary's statement; but at that stage the limited and early information about the new variant was not such as to have an impact on the decision."

Acland-Hood may have corrected the record, but Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, who made similar claims during the hearing on January 13, has not.

Williamson claimed at the time that his department was "in a position where the knowledge of the new variant was certainly not something that we had any understanding or knowledge of" when it issued the direction.

"At that stage, none of us was aware of the new variant and we were not aware of the impact that would ultimately have in terms of case rates and the impact more widely across the country, including in London."

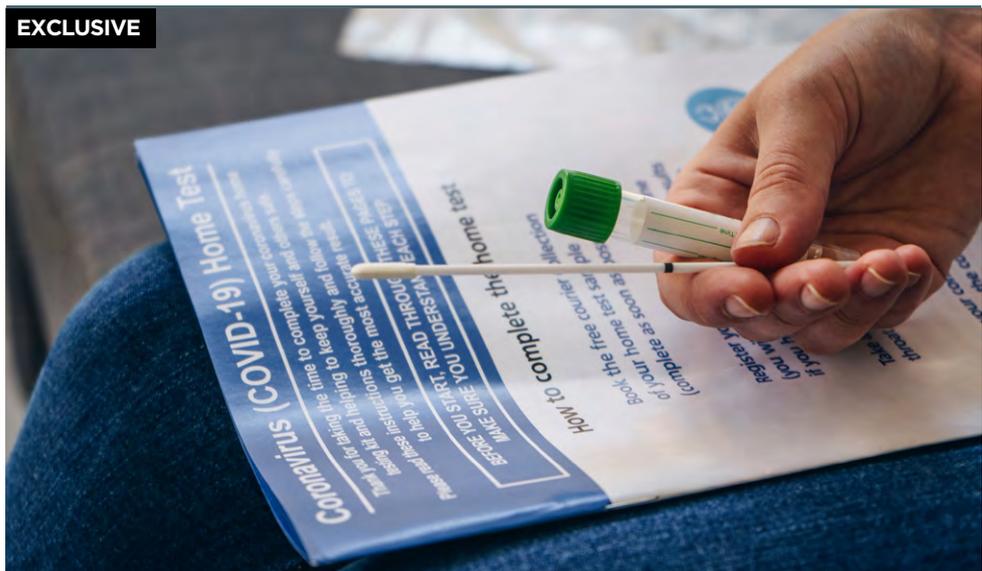
The education secretary also claimed in a *Good Morning Britain* interview last week that the new variant was not known about "even in mid-December", after he was asked

why some schools had reopened for just one day on Monday January 4.

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said Acland-Hood had "done the right thing" in correcting the record, and said Williamson should now "do the same".

"It's very important that evidence given to select committees is correct."

News



Schools can reclaim Covid testing cash

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

Schools that could lose thousands of pounds because of a change in the way funding for Covid testing is allocated will be able to claim the cash back, the Department for Education has said.

The clarification comes after a *Schools Week* investigation found a shift by the DfE to only fund testing costs based on the number of results uploaded, rather than on overall pupil and staff numbers, could leave some schools more than £20,000 out of pocket.

Secondary schools were told to prepare for mass testing of pupils upon their return in January, alongside regular testing of staff and repeated tests for close contacts of confirmed cases.

But the exercise was downsized after contact testing was paused and partial closures meant fewer pupils and staff in school.

Schools were initially told they would receive extra cash for testing based on pupil numbers submitted in the autumn census and a "standard assumption" of staff numbers.

But in an update last week, the department said funding would now be allocated against the number of test results recorded "to ensure the most accurate costs incurred are captured".

Schools that spent money hiring marquees, agency staff and equipment on the basis that funding would be based on their overall numbers were left fearing for their budgets.

However, after being approached by *Schools Week* about the issue, the DfE said it would accept claims from schools for money lost.

"No individual school should lose out because of the change. Schools that committed to higher levels of spending before we changed our guidance will be eligible to receive

additional support."

Tina Button, the business manager at The Wyvern School in Ashford, Kent, said her school had trained four agency staff.

"Although we have managed to whittle this down to two now, and two of the school team, it has still meant additional expense," she said. Her school struggled to access the site used to report results in the first week of testing, leading to fears they would see a further reduction.

Analysis of the DfE's testing workforce planning tool by *Schools Week* found that larger secondary schools faced losing the most money.

A secondary school outside London with 2,000 pupils and 200 staff would have received £29,550 under the old funding system, to cover the period from January 4 to the February half term. Under the new approach, the same school with 5 per cent pupil attendance and 30 per cent of staff to test each week would get just £13,670.

For a school of the same size in inner London, the reduction would be from £38,350 to £17,490.

Hilary Goldsmith, a school business leadership consultant, said schools had "spent hundreds of hours researching, studying and training their staff on how to deliver the tests effectively".

Another business leader, who asked not to be named, described the change to funding by test results uploaded as a "sneaky shift".

It comes after analysis by the DfE found that changes to prices as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic had wiped out an expected real-terms increase in school funding this year.

Average per-pupil funding for five to 16-year-olds fell about 0.6 per cent in real terms between 2019-20 and 2020-21, when it was forecast to rise by 4.1 per cent.

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Heads want refunds after pupil premium change

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

Headteachers want refunds for the thousands of pounds they say they will lose after the government changed its method for handing out pupil premium cash.

The Department for Education will calculate the number of children eligible for funding from April based on the October census, instead of the January census it previously used.

The change, made on the last day of the autumn term, means schools will not be able to claim cash for disadvantaged pupils who have become eligible for free school meals since October.

Stuart Guest, the headteacher of Colebourne Primary School in Birmingham, said that while the change might not usually have caused an issue, the pandemic had meant more families qualified for help than usual.

Primary schools receive £1,345 extra funding per child under the pupil premium, while secondaries get £955 more.

Since the October census, six extra children in Guest's school have qualified for the premium. He said the school would have to make up the extra £8,000 from other funds "at a time when budgets are literally down to the penny".

He called for the government to "refund schools based on the January census" as the late change meant they were unable to plan for the loss.

Alex Rawlings, the head of Quarry Bank Primary in Dudley, said 23 children had become eligible for pupil premium since the pandemic began (a 20 per cent increase), with 12 of those coming since October. The school stood to lose out on more than £16,000.

"Schools should receive the funding for the children that they have, backdoor cuts damage the provision to children."

Another primary head, who wanted to remain anonymous, said their school would miss out on more than £32,000.

A rough estimate by campaigner Andy Jolley found the change could amount to some £250 million across all schools.

Julia Harnden, funding specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said it would be helpful "if there could be some form of financial mitigation".

However, the DfE claimed the change would deliver increased funding to schools because more pupils were eligible for the extra cash.

News

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Pupil wellbeing 'dashboards' to help school support

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Schools in Manchester will be able to use a wellbeing dashboard to see how well their students are coping in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

A £900,000 pioneering programme, led by the University of Manchester and the mental health charity Anna Freud Centre, aims to survey between 30-50,000 year 8 and 10 pupils about their wellbeing.

Starting in the autumn, the three-year programme will allow anonymous data to be pulled together into an "accessible" dashboard for schools. It will enable leaders to compare cohorts, such as by sex or pupils eligible for free school meals, as well as trends more locally to ensure they can target support.

James Eldon, the principal of the Manchester Academy and chair of the Manchester Heads Group, said the city-wide project could not come at a better time.

"It's absolutely critical, particularly after this lockdown. An actual data stream, something that could be moderated across a wide range of schools, could be really useful."

It is expected students will be asked about anxiety and depression, positive emotions and questions from the GMCA's "life readiness" survey.

Schools will only be able to see data for groups of ten or more, so children cannot be identified. The Child Outcomes Research Consortium will help schools



evaluate provision such as identifying vulnerable groups and implementing interventions.

Some of the team behind the project worked on a similar scheme, HeadStart, in which pupils in six local authorities have been surveyed on their wellbeing. The scheme, scheduled to run between 2017 and 2021, has been disrupted by the pandemic.

This new project, which will cover the Greater Manchester Combined Authority region, is thought to be the first in the UK to cover all secondary schools in a city region. Schools will be approached to participate after Easter.

The NHS found the number of school-aged children with a mental health disorder rose from one in nine in 2017, to one in six last year. Covid has heightened concern.

The Manchester project still needs to raise about £200,000, but Professor Neil Humphrey, from

the university, said a "conscious decision" was made to push forward because of the potential impact of Covid.

Eldon said that while it was vital to identify problems, the resources and capacity to address the issues would be "more complex" after the pandemic.

"The project will identify some real need, how does Greater Manchester collaborate to address the need across services?"

In 2017 the government pledged that the NHS would run mental health support teams to improve the link between schools and local health services.

This week, Anne Longfield, the children's commissioner, said support teams should be in "every region" of England, rather than the 25 per cent the government had pledged.

The Education Policy Institute has also recommended the government introduce a new £650 million wellbeing fund – matching the academic catch-up funding.

The think tank also suggested that aspiring school leaders should spend time in alternative provision so they were better prepared to support children with mental and emotional needs.

A government spokesperson said it was "absolutely committed" to supporting the mental wellbeing of children.

"Early intervention and treatment is vital, and we are providing an extra £2.3 billion to help an additional 345,000 children and young people access NHS-funded services or school and college-based support."



Anne Longfield

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

Joining live lessons won't be 'the norm', says Ofsted

Ofsted has reassured schools that inspectors will not be joining pupils' live lessons as "the norm" during its remote monitoring inspections this term.

New guidance last week said inspectors could join online lessons to "understand how education is being provided by the school".

The announcement prompted concern from teachers who feared that the practice would heap pressure on staff delivering remote learning.

However, an Ofsted spokesperson clarified that "when inspectors need to observe remote education in action, they will generally view pre-recorded material".

They added that sometimes inspectors might view live lessons "because the school has requested them to, but this won't be the norm".

Ofsted began its remote inspections this week after changing its plans to conduct inspections in person.

Elsewhere, the guidance said inspectors

might also have discussions, either remotely or in person, with staff and pupils about their work and experiences.

But when inspectors needed to speak to pupils, "it will be those who are onsite, in school ... and inspectors will not be speaking to pupils in their home as part of normal inspection activity".

Ofsted said the focus of the monitoring inspection was to assure parents and support school improvement.

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Covid 'bounce' boosts trust accounts

JESS STAUFENBERG

@STAUFENBERGJ

Multi-academy trusts have saved £25,000 on average following pandemic closures – although experts are warning any “Covid bounce” cash will be swallowed up this year.

A survey of about 300 trusts shows their average surpluses improved from £196,000 in the 2018-19 academic year, to £221,000 last year, according to the Kreston Reeves annual academies benchmark report.

Lower maintenance and utility bills combined with savings on supply staff, trips and educational resources have contributed towards greater savings for trusts, said the report.

The findings seem to challenge the narrative that additional Covid costs for schools – such as cleaning – are stretching budgets.

Secondary schools saved the most, with the average surplus increasing about £130,000 to £147,064 – a result of secondaries being “closed” longer than primaries. But surpluses also rose in primary schools, from £12,000 on average to £25,000.

Pam Tuckett, who is head of education at accountancy firm Bishop Fleming and a lead author of the report, said funding boosts such as the £650 million Covid catch-up package, announced in July



last year, had helped. Seventy per cent of schools had also made savings on supply staff.

But the positive findings “mask” budgetary pressures over deep cleaning and technological investment, she said.

At the same time additional income across trusts have fallen as “premises can’t be hired out”.

Micon Metcalfe, the chief financial officer at the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust, said her trust saved £80,000 on utility costs between March and August last year compared with the previous year.

Her trust also posted a revenue surplus in 2019-20 that was £500,000 higher than forecast.

“There’s been no events, no examinations, no trips,” she said. It emerged last week that schools were handed back about 25 per cent of cancelled exam fees.

But she warned that although there had been savings, “there will be exceptional costs when we reopen. I’d be slightly wary of

the 2019-20 picture. It was a Covid bounce that we need to keep an eye on.”

Simon Oxenham, the national lead at the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL), said any gains from the past academic year were likely to become significant losses for this one

His analysis for ISBL, shared exclusively with *Schools Week*, forecasts an additional spend of £250 to £500 per pupil in this academic year.

“Any gains ... are likely to become significant losses for this year. ISBL would encourage all schools to regularly update their forecasts as a result,” he said.

Stephen Morales, the institute’s chief executive, said this year would be “much tougher. The start-stop nature of policy, more pupils back in school, mass testing – these reserves could be eroded very quickly.”

The report also revealed that the percentage of trusts with a cumulative deficit fell from 8 per cent in 2019, to 5 per cent in 2020. But Tuckett again warned this change was likely to be due to more single academy trusts joining larger trusts, diluting their individual deficit.

Meanwhile, the percentage of trusts that “GAG pool” – where funding for individual schools is pooled in a central pot and redistributed by the trust based on need – has doubled from 5.2 per cent to 11 per cent.

CfEY founder to stand down

The founder and chief executive of the Centre for Education and Youth think tank is to stand down after almost 12 years.

Loic Menzies (pictured), who established the organisation as LKMCo in 2009, said it was “time for a new chief executive to decide what CfEY’s next chapter will look like”.

Since its launch, the think tank has grown from a one-man band to a team of 12, publishing regular research reports on the education and youth sectors. The CfEY’s first full-length book, *Young People on the*

Margins, will be published in March.

“I’ve always believed that the moment CfEY would be properly solid would be the moment I knew the organisation could go on to flourish even if I got hit by a school bus or fell off a mountain,” Menzies said.

“We’ve now reached that point and I’m convinced that the organisation will go on to achieve great things without me.”

CfEY will be recruiting from February. Menzies said he’d be dedicating more time to his favourite hobby – climbing mountains.



News

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Exam boards back down on fee demands

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOOTH

EXCLUSIVE

Schools can now delay paying exam fees after boards offered concessions following a backlash about their plans to raise prices in a year when exams will not be held.

A Schools Week investigation revealed last week that boards had increased their fees across GCSEs and A-levels between 2 and 5 per cent.

They had pledged to return any savings when exact plans for their involvement in producing grades were known.

But two boards have now put off asking for the full cash from schools, with another reviewing its approach.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said a "more sensible and considered approach" for fees payment was "welcome news".

"At a time when heads are under intense daily pressure, they do not need the added financial worry that uncertainty about fees brings. We made our feelings on the matter clear," he said.

"Thankfully common sense seems to have prevailed and we look forward to learning more about the arrangements exam boards are putting in place for assessing qualifications."

At AQA, a mathematics GCSE has risen from £36.50 last summer to £38.35, an increase of 5 per cent.

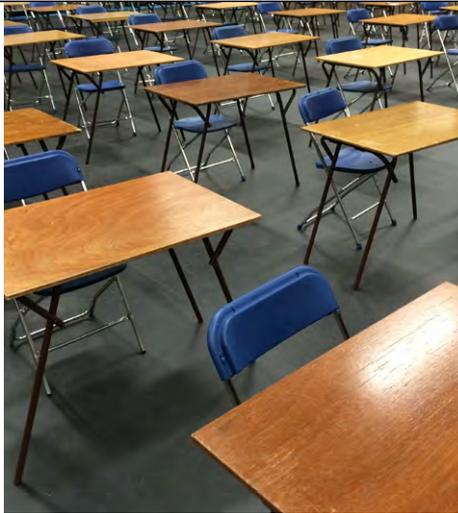
It means an average size secondary with 200 year 11s taking nine GCSEs could face paying an extra £3,870. Price increases vary between subjects.

Schools Week analysis shows that if the entry numbers for 16-year-olds are the same as last year, AQA - a not-for-profit organisation - could rake in an extra £4.17 million from these nine subjects. More than 1.6 million pupils entered these nine GCSEs last year.

The board said on Friday it had listened to school and colleges and changed its approach.

Mark Bedlow, its chief operating officer, said: "We understand the financial pressures that schools and colleges are under - so, if they'd prefer, we'd be happy for them to pay 50 per cent of the published fees now and, when we know what our final costs are, we'll ask them for the difference."

OCR exam fees, published at the end of last week, show a 3 per cent increase. A maths GCSE



has risen from £41.75 to £43, £1.25 extra.

Across nine GCSEs this could cost an additional £11.25 extra for each pupil, and over a year 11 cohort of 200 pupils, about £2,250.

If entry rates are the same as last summer for these papers, OCR could make an additional £180,941. Almost 145,000 pupils entered these nine GCSEs last year.

This week, OCR told Schools Week it was delaying its invoicing until it had the results of the Ofqual and Department for Education exams replacement consultation. This would help schools "to manage their budgets".

The deadline for exam entries for all boards is February 21, which is days before Ofqual is

expected to announce the final plan.

An OCR spokesperson said: "This will give us and schools and colleges time to understand the outcomes of the consultation and create an approach that will avoid extra work for schools and colleges at a busy time."

The board said this could mean it adjusted its fees before invoicing schools and colleges. But if it didn't have enough information of costs at that stage, it would refund schools as soon as it had clarity.

Meanwhile Pearson has now said it is "carefully reviewing" how best to support schools with payments amid "budgetary challenges".

Fees at the board had increased about 2 per cent. If entry numbers are the same as last summer (672,420) across nine GCSEs, then Pearson could bring in an extra £569,571.

EXCLUSIVE



'Ridiculous': exam boards slammed for raising fees at a time of crisis

SAMANTHA BOOTH @SAMANTHAJBOOTH

Schools will pay millions of pounds more in exam fees this year after prices were increased - despite exams not going ahead and teachers being expected to mark any assessments that might be set. However, boards have said fees had to be published before schools could set

Schools Week analysis shows that if the entry numbers for 16-year-olds are the same as last year's, from these nine subjects alone, AQA - a not-for-profit organisation - could rake in an extra £4.17 million. At A-level, the entry fee for mathematics has risen from £116.45 to £122.30 - an increase of £5.85. Mark Bedlow, AQA's chief operating officer, said he would not support any increases

EXAM FEE CHANGES



Schools able to pay half of fees now and the rest later



Delaying invoicing until exams consultation outcome



"Carefully reviewing" how to best support schools

Ofsted

Remote education: the good, the bad and the ugly

Ofsted has published a report into remote education after months of school visits and interviews with staff and parents. Here's what you need to know.

1 Switch to remote education has increased workload

Ofsted found leaders "frequently cited" how remote learning had increased teachers' workload, with it often becoming "trickier during the autumn term".



This was in part because of the added pressure of providing learning inside and outside the classroom – something Ofsted noted was a "particularly challenging situation".

Pressures were not as great when whole year or class bubbles were sent home to self-isolate as teachers could revert to full remote education.

Eighty-six per cent of teachers said their work had increased since the start of remote learning, with 45 per cent saying it had "increased greatly".

2 Difficulty aligning curriculum with remote learning

Only a small proportion of teachers – 15 per cent – said their school had managed to "completely" align their remote education to their intended curriculum.



A further 65 per cent said they had "somewhat" aligned remote learning with the curriculum, according to YouGov survey data.

But subjects such as art, science, physical education and design and technology were the most problematic to teach remotely because of their practical aspects.

Ofsted found examples of schools being able to deliver "as full a curriculum offer as possible" by delivering arts supplies and musical equipment to pupils' home, as well as using pre-recorded videos to demonstrate science experiments.

3 One third of teachers are not confident delivering online lessons

Just over a third of respondents admitted they were not confident teaching remotely.



However, about 48 per cent said they were quite confident, with 17 per cent saying they were "very confident" delivering teaching this way.

Ofsted said some teachers shortened remote lessons to aid pupils' concentration spans.

4 SEND children 'more disengaged with learning'

The report also flagged worries over keeping pupils motivated, with 40 per cent of parents listing their child's focus as a main concern.



However, the survey found that 59 per cent of parents with children with special educational needs said their child had been disengaged with remote learning.

Schools also raised concerns that learning gaps would be greater for pupils with SEND, and that the negative social and emotional impact because of remote learning "would be more severe for some of these pupils".

Fewer than half (46 per cent) of the teachers surveyed said their school offered additional remote learning arrangements for pupils with SEND.

5 Schools went 'out of their way' to provide laptops

While access to digital devices was an "initial barrier" faced by many schools, especially for pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds, Ofsted found that leaders went "out of their way to ensure that all pupils could access their digital platform".



That included sourcing appropriate devices from the local community – working with local businesses and charities to acquire devices.

But when asked for their main challenges about their children learning remotely, 11 per cent of parents listed both access to an appropriate device and issues with technology. One in ten parents also cited poor internet connection.

6 Solution for shortage subjects and snow days

Schools said remote systems developed during the pandemic could help future video lessons "where there are subject-specific teacher recruitment and retention issues".



Video lessons were also put forward as a solution to covering staff absences, with "lessons from subject experts" providing cover instead of a usual substitute. They could also be used to support revision.

Leaders also said remote education could reduce potential lost learning during snow days or extended pupil absence.

EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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It will take more than vaccinating teachers early to reopen schools

Labour's call to vaccinate school staff over February half-term is misguided. The party wants key workers to be included in the next phase of vaccinations for high-risk groups: the over-50s and under-65s considered at risk.

But it's hard to justify a teacher in their twenties getting the vaccine ahead of somebody with an underlying health condition.

Vaccinating teachers has been touted as a way to reopen schools. But we know they are closed to stop large numbers of pupils mixing, and so bring down transmission rates.

Giving teachers a vaccine won't solve that.

Experts on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation are best placed to make decisions on this, rightly prioritising reducing deaths and hospital stays.

Special school staff do have a strong case for priority, though, as many will be carrying out clinical procedures. It's good to see councils taking the lead on this - but it has created somewhat of a postcode lottery.

Meanwhile, vaccinating school staff after the

first phase of priority groups - to ensure they are ahead of people who can more easily work from home - is a better proposal.

The government has bought itself some time on the calls to do more to keep staff safe by confirming classrooms will remain partially closed until March 8 at the earliest.

Although that's a very tentative date, it feels like Groundhog Day with schools left waiting for a plan on how they will reopen (staggered year groups, rotas?), what will replace exams, and when will laptop shortages be plugged.

Why were contingency plans not drawn up last year so that schools, pupils and parents didn't have to go through this again?

The disappearance of Gavin Williamson, sidelined for the schools announcements this week, is also intriguing.

One national newspaper reported that he disagreed with No 10 and wanted schools to reopen after February half-term. Has Downing St finally, like the profession, lost faith in the education secretary?

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Special school staff 'should get vaccine priority'

Sharon Hutchinson, comment

The consideration of teaching staff receiving the vaccine should be a priority. Teaching assistants are taking on the role of qualified teachers and working with key worker children. They are mixing with up to 15 households that include parents who range from ambulance drivers, nurses, carers and other professions that are at high risk of either catching the virus or becoming a carrier. This is having a great strain on teachers' mental health.

Regulator: ONS should have 'elaborated on limitations' of controversial teacher Covid analysis

Dominic Wall

While the figures from the Office for National Statistics published last Monday captured critical information, it took the National Education Union to draw out the impacts hidden in the data; most striking of which was that support staff in special schools are most at risk of catching Covid at work.

This is no surprise as they provide personal care up close to disabled children every day, some of whom will have asymptomatic infection.

The answer is already here: last week dozens of local authorities included these staff in the priority group of "care workers" - and some have already received the vaccine.

This needs to be rolled out across the country to protect all of these staff, and the children they care for, so that we can get children and staff back in school and take the pressure off the hard-pressed parents of children with SEND.

Ofqual publishes 2021 exams consultation

Richard Jolly

As a parent of two children in their GCSE and A-level years, this proposal frustrates me for many reasons.

First, it has been announced that exams are cancelled this year out of fairness; why then are we suddenly being consulted with on whether to have them? The unfairness of the pandemic impact has not changed.

Second, teachers are already overworked and have no time to mark exams (free!). Even if they did, choosing the topics on which to assess makes levelling the playing field across schools impossible. Exams are only effective if it's the same for all. Lastly, and sadly, it smacks of distrust in teachers' ability to do their job. Exam boards are needed when exams take place; if they are

REPLY OF THE WEEK **Julie Lewis**

Ofsted receives 13,000 emails praising schools (and just 260 complaints)

Given that teachers were told only the night before that they were to do online teaching, I feel they are doing an excellent job. Teachers are all working extremely hard in a job that has completely changed. A bit of praise and thanks wouldn't go amiss.



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

cancelled, they are not needed. So why is this proposal trying (very hard!) to get them involved? It is simple: trust the teachers to do their job, and tell the exam boards to prepare for next year. This is the kind of certainty my children (and me!) need.

Kate Hoinville

The lack of teaching and time in school means the grades should be based on work previously carried out and previous assessments. Some children have not missed school and some have hardly been in because they have been isolating - something out of everyone's control.

Let the teachers assess the students and grade them taking into account the previous year's work. Anything else is unfair on children who have missed lessons.

Ofsted receives 13,000 emails praising schools (and just 260 complaints)

Lisa Thompson

I would like to invite Gavin Williamson to our school, where we are accommodating key worker/vulnerable children, and have since the pandemic started. We have never closed.

So Mr Williamson, our door is open for you to visit us for a week, or a month, just to see how we work in the real world. We teachers have followed guidelines to the letter, fearing for our own safety and that of our families, only to be told by you and the government that it is safe to do so.

If this is the case I ask you to stop talking the talk and show us how safe it is by joining us - instead of putting us down and making us look like the bad guys who are not doing their jobs right.

Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ



‘Families from communities like ours often think they’re not participators in democracy’

The collapse of Carillion left Rachel Hornsey’s primary pupils bewildered amid the rubble of a building site. She explains how the experience prepared her for Covid

Rachel Hornsey, headteacher at Sutton Courtenay Church of England primary school, knows all too well what it’s like to wait until the eleventh hour to find out if she can open her school – long before the pandemic left leaders accustomed to that constant suspense. She must be one of the only heads in the country who has found the coronavirus “much easier” to manage than another well-publicised collapse that threatened to derail infrastructure projects across England: the liquidation of building company Carillion. Now long forgotten amid bigger global challenges, it gave a handful of schools, including Hornsey’s, an unwelcome early

taste of what it’s like to have little control over getting children back in the classroom. Hornsey was an English lead and advanced skills teacher when she got a call from the outgoing head at Sutton Courtenay, telling her to put in an application for headship in 2016. The school, then overseen by the council and with an old ‘good’ Ofsted grade from 2012, was struggling for candidates. As Hornsey puts it, “The data was looking dodgy and it was due an inspection.” One interviewee left halfway through. While she had a clear vision, Hornsey, who is a powerhouse of persuasive speaking style, landed the job without deputy headship experience. “I was massively incompetent

for the job, frankly,” she laughs. “It was straight into headship, and all I knew was there was this building project planned.” As she sought to improve SATs results, delays soon emerged to Carillion’s promised deadline of September 2017 for two badly needed classrooms and a car park. “They’d say they’d start on the car park and then nothing would happen and they’d say, ‘Sorry, it’s been pushed back.’” Hornsey requested temporary classrooms instead. But the problems had only just begun. First off, the toilets in the temporary classrooms didn’t work. Then the company made a road to them that “carved the playground in half”, leaving holes where

Profile: Rachel Hornsey



Abandoned building projects in June 2018



The new school grounds in summer 2019



Hornsey with pupils

“There were trenches in the playground. I can’t describe how awful it was”

pipes had been laid. “The Sunday before the children were due back in September, there were trenches in the playground. I can’t describe how awful it was,” says Hornsey. She shakes her head as she recalls parents arriving on the first day with builders “still hosing the playground down”. The company accidentally cut the gas pipe so there was no hot water and no heating. “The cook was trying her best, but she was working off a tea urn. For the entire first term, the whole school was eating sandwiches for lunch.”

To cap it all, the builders then cut through the electricity cables. “Every alarm in the place went off. We got a generator which stayed on the playground for two weeks.” The worst thing was the disruption for pupils, many of whom already have disrupted home lives, says Hornsey. Because only half the playground was available, staff had to stagger groups of pupils allowed outside, much in the manner of the bubbles schools have had to get to grips with recently. “Everything going on made it a very unsettled school environment for them.”

Then Ofsted arrived. The school was

immediately downgraded to ‘requires improvement’ following the November visit in 2017. Inspectors did note that the “headteacher’s determined leadership is underpinned by a strong moral purpose” and said efforts to improve reading and maths were “beginning to bear fruit”.

“The RI grade massively impacted the school. I can’t describe how horrible it feels to have your back against the wall like that, it just feels like you’re fighting on all fronts. It’s like a badge of shame.”

Then one evening in January 2018, Hornsey saw on the telly that Carillion had collapsed. “No one contacted us,” she says. “It was deathly quiet.” The first official communication she received was from the company to whom Carillion had subcontracted the school’s fencing. “They rang to say, ‘We’re coming to get the fence’. And I said, ‘No, you can’t do that, because it will be an unsafe school!’” The local authority

suggested she actually lock the school gates and not let anyone in. From January to June 2018 the school was an abandoned building site. Around that time, then-education secretary Damian Hinds said a “small number” of councils and academy trusts had building projects with Carillion but that the department did “not consider there will be significant issues with completing the work required”. The work was finally completed after the local authority contracted another building company, Inside Out, to come in – but even then Hornsey was on tenterhooks, with the health and safety documentation signed off only hours before the school was due to open in September 2018.

It seems Hornsey’s background has played no small part in prompting her to feel angered, rather than defeated. A kick against authority has always been part of her character, since she “didn’t really like school” because she “doesn’t like being told what to do”. Both her parents were teachers who encouraged her and her sister in dinner table debate, and her father was also a local councillor with working-class roots. “I think one of the most powerful things was watching him canvassing on foot, actually talking to people about their concerns. People used to ring him up when there were problems.” Meanwhile her sister has gone on to be a leading figure in the patenting industry. “It was a family of strong women. All the women in my family had professional

Profile: Rachel Hornsey



The school car park the day before the children were to come back, September 2017



Talking time in the classroom



Pupils practising interview techniques

careers, in teaching or in nursing. To be fair, everyone in my family was opinionated."

The result is that Hornsey "had this understanding of structures of power from quite young." She was involved in student politics at Leeds University while studying politics itself, and a sense of giving agency to people has always mattered to her. Furious with the imposition on her families, she called the BBC in to film the abandoned building site. It was then that she noticed a curious side effect. "The more the children kept appearing on film, the higher everyone's self-esteem seemed to rise," explains Hornsey. "They were finding their voice. They felt listened to and important."

It was a "short step from there" to start filming the children as a technique. Once more preempting pandemic teaching methods, Hornsey and her team began recording pupils as they explained complex

"The more the children kept appearing on film, the higher their self-esteem rose"

answers to maths problems or ethical issues. Pupils watch the videos back and consider their answer, before re-recording them until they have developed their response and can publish them on the school's own YouTube channel. "Children today are so comfy around a smartphone – their parents have been recording them since they were little," says Hornsey. "They watch YouTubers and they're confident about talking into a camera." The school even included a video of the children in a Condition Improvement Fund bid.

"This is about education, but it's also about getting children involved in democracy,"

Hornsey continues. "Families from communities like ours often think they're not participators in that, they think it's for other people. It's about understanding how to use the structures of power and to get things changed."

Hornsey's thinking explains why pupils are encouraged to answer a specific question in the history curriculum: who is in charge? When studying Guy Fawkes or the Romans, the children work out who is pulling the decision strings. Understanding that someone was responsible for the very visible mess in the playground, and they could be challenged through the media, helped the school community to resolve the issue, it seems. Soon after, Hornsey converted the school to an academy and joined the Ridgeway Education Trust "to feel supported and part of a wider ethos".

Yet Hornsey still says she'd take the coronavirus over repeating those 14 Carillion months. "The idea of the school as a centre of the community has finally been put to the fore again through the pandemic. I had long dark nights of the soul before. But this is about a communal effort. That's what it's about."



The mural pupils painted on the builders' fence, June 2018

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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SARAH DOVE
President, PRUsAP



AP funding is leading us into a post-Covid capacity crisis

The lack of referrals during the Covid crisis means that funding for PRU and AP is likely to be reduced in future – just when we are going to need it most, writes Sarah Dove

Over the past nine months I have heard from a number of senior leaders of pupil referral units (PRUs) and alternative provision (AP) expressing serious concerns about reduced funding for their schools. For many, a lack of referrals during this time of crisis has meant that there will be a significant decrease in pupil funding. Some have seen as much as a 40 per cent decline in referrals. In these schools this will directly translate into staff redundancies and a reduction in provision for children and young people.

As if a pandemic, an uncertain educational landscape and increased pressures to support vulnerable children weren't already enough, senior leaders are dealing with an ongoing threat to their schools' funding. This is not a localised issue either, but a national one.

It will have a fundamental impact on the infrastructure that is available to support children who are excluded from school, at risk of exclusion or who have medical needs and are unable to access

school. When demand rises again for alternative provision places, the capacity may not be there.

There is no denying that funding for PRU and AP is complex, inconsistent and for too many, uncertain. APs are typically funded on a per-place basis. This basic allocation is then topped up from other sources, such as high-needs funding and local commissioning.

But even this variable system doesn't apply to the whole sector. Some local arrangements are entirely different.

The 2018 *Forgotten Children* report notes that, "the commissioning of AP is varied, describing a landscape where some schools use a fully centralised system, right through to schools commissioning solely in isolation". In over two years since it was published and widely endorsed, not much has changed. Because this issue hasn't been addressed robustly, the Covid crisis has turned the report's warnings into a reality.

The underlying issue is that, like pupil premium funding, Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) place funding is based on census

returns on a particular point in time: it fails to take into account AP schools' fluctuating rolls. Some moments in time will simply record more young people on roll in alternative provision. In normal times, this is problematic enough. With the disruptions of lockdowns and partial closures, it reaches potentially catastrophic levels.

“Funding fails to take into account AP schools' fluctuating rolls

In practice, this means that headteachers who are already balancing lateral flow testing, making high levels of attendance as safe as possible and coordinating provision on site and at home are now also beginning the process of consulting unions regarding redundancies. These are fundamental cuts to the provision they can offer. Without restructuring, many face running into budget deficits that can't be signed off.

As one headteacher told me, "Really talented staff are at risk. People are hiding and crying at work again, and the roles at risk are senior and pastoral. This impacts hugely on day-to-day running." This

issue isn't isolated. I was invited to a meeting with over 20 free-school heads where the majority were sharing the same problems. Many of them had written to the Department for Education, spoken to their MPs and brought their concerns to the ESFA. To date, it appears these concerns remain unheeded.

The concern for what happens to these schools and over the coming weeks, months and years is grave. Graver still is the impact on local capacity. Reducing the number of places and staff risks not only losing the expertise it takes to support these young people, but that we will end up pushing them into unregulated and unregistered provision.

Covid may have slowed the movement of pupils from mainstream schools to AP, but the idea children's needs have reduced, or that schools' ability to cater for them has somehow drastically improved, is naive at best. All evidence suggests the opposite is true.

There is now a real risk that the infrastructure to prevent exclusions and provide continuity of education will simply not be available when we come to need it again. Caring for vulnerable children surely deserves a long-term plan.

Opinion

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SANDY TOMLINSON

School business professional and ISBL Trustee

Discrimination against BAME school business professionals is nothing new

A new report into diversity among school business professionals (SBPs) offers new insights into this under-researched workforce, writes Sandy Tomlinson

Last month, the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL) published a report on diversity in the school business profession. Penned by Dr Fiona Creaby, its findings are based on a small-scale research project because sadly, a more complete data set is still lacking. The report is no less important for it and, as Creaby notes, it is intended “to serve as a catalyst for important conversations”.

As a Black, female school business professional, I empathise with Creaby’s findings. My lived experiences are similar to those it describes. In fact, I’ve been involved in many attempts to address lack of equality and diversity in the sector and seen similar data published more than once. But while its aim and many of its findings are not new, I am pleased that it provides useful insights into an under-researched workforce.

The findings highlight problems that are unsurprisingly similar to those found in broader society. The reason exposing educational leaders to them matters is because

one of the most important of those findings is that education is not immune to them. Sometimes, these behaviours are subtle. Sometimes perhaps even unintended. Either way, they lead to discrimination.

An accent, the way someone chooses to express themselves or dress, hairstyles, food choices, cultural or religious expressions. All of these and more inform decisions

about whether or not someone will fit into an existing culture or organisation. They put image over substance, and they shouldn’t.

A telling example from the report is that despite often feeling like a ‘lone voice’ in decision making, ethnic-minority school business professionals (SBPs) felt more likely to be perceived as ‘rude’ for speaking out. Another, that ethnic-minority SBPs were more likely to have pursued and obtained higher-level qualifications simply to attain the same levels as their white peers within organisations.

Leaders of these organisations must reflect on the extent to which they have slipped, consciously or unconsciously, into trying to build



teams in their own image. Ethical leaders have a duty to identify and undo such bias, yet the evidence shows this is not always the case.

Bemoaning the data this report reveals is not enough. To get below the surface of the issues, we need to be having very direct conversations with all school leaders, including governors and trustees. These conversations ought to be led by the

“Bemoaning the data this report reveals is not enough”

most authoritative academics and researchers in the field and they ought to encourage participation by those who can share their experiences of the damage caused by discrimination.

Every leader must undertake the often-uncomfortable deep self-reflection that asks to what extent they are complicit in allowing inequity in our profession. But more than that, every leader must accept that silence and inaction are as bad as wilful discrimination. Taking the risk to call it out and to ensure culture and values don’t permit its existence are the work of everyone involved in decision-making. It is also the work of every SBP colleague who is a witness to it.

In my capacity as a trustee at ISBL, I will be encouraging the institute to bring together sector leaders, relevant academics and front-line practitioners to begin a coaching, mentoring and behaviour change programme to support school leaders who are serious about making a change.

Last week’s inauguration of the 46th president of the United States and his ceiling-breaking, Black, female vice-president focused on healing, unity and compassionate leadership. It was a moment of global significance and a new start for the work of inclusivity and equity. The phenomenal oracy of young, Black, female national youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman captured audiences worldwide.

If we are to nurture such talent here, our young, Black men and women must see what they can be. That means there must be more diversity in educational leadership. It also means there must be more diversity at all levels, not least in the school business profession which influences so much of how resources are distributed for young people’s benefit.

And all of that will be helped, of course, by more deliberate and systematic gathering of data about our vital profession.

Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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There is plenty of inspiration to draw on worldwide if we seek to reform our assessment system – as we surely must now do, writes Olly Newton

As we all know too well by now, the announcement of another drawn-out lockdown is terrible news for our mental health, and especially that of young people. The impact is clear. In a survey of 2,000 young people by the mental health charity, YoungMinds last year, 80 per cent of respondents said the pandemic had made their mental health worse.

It's easy to blame this crisis on the pandemic. Online learning, exam cancellations and mutant algorithms certainly haven't helped, but the truth is that young people's mental health was suffering long before Covid. The pressures of education, and in particular our assessment system, have played no small part in it. By and large, all our assessments are concerned with is students' knowledge recall, with far too little focus on the skills they are developing.

Sadly, though exams are cancelled for the second year running, the government is still chasing after a replacement system that will adequately compare with it and make the transition back to the status quo as smooth as possible. This government paralysis on meaningful reform means the impetus has fallen on the shoulders of the wider education sector. It's that, or stand on the sidelines as all the opportunities made evident by the crisis are wasted.

There is appetite for it, too. But is there an appetite for this right now? At the end of 2020, Edge partnered with YouGov to poll over 1,000 teachers. It found overwhelming support for



OLLY NEWTON

Executive director, Edge Foundation

Our assessment system contributes to poor mental health

changes to the assessment system, much of it on mental health grounds: 90 per cent agreed that young people find the exam system increasingly stressful, while 77 per cent agreed that assessment solely through

obsession with exam results and standardised testing. This is neither new nor specific to us, and there is plenty of inspiration to draw on worldwide.

In complete contrast with our

“ Young people's mental health was suffering long before Covid

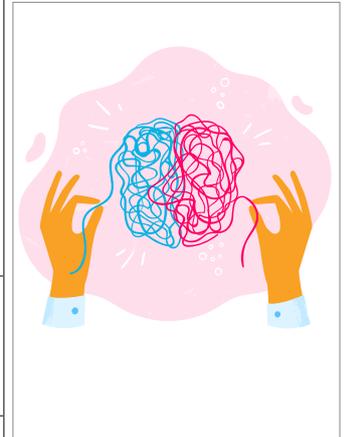
exams is damaging to young people's wellbeing and confidence. And 89 per cent agreed that now is the right time to rethink assessment. For the sake of young people's mental health, it is clear that we have a duty to reform the system.

Present assessment methods largely ignore important employability and life skills such as communication, teamworking and creative problem-solving. Practical and applied learning are completely overlooked. Parents and teachers know it. Pupils know it. Even employers do. For some time already, firms like PwC, KPMG and EY have been using their own strength-based evaluations to fill the assessment gap where conventional methods are lacking.

A reformed assessment system must move away from our current

culture of 'teaching to the test', the New York Performance Standards Consortium, a coalition of schools in the US, has done away with standardised testing completely. Instead, their approach focuses on in-depth literacy, mathematical problem-solving and application of the scientific method. It incorporates social studies and other related topics. Crucially, assessment evolves out of the curriculum and classroom discussion, actively encouraging students to shape their own evaluation.

Animas High School in Colorado carries out assessment in the form of digital portfolios. Students create their own website, which showcases their academic work, as well as their personal, career and study goals. A sort of CV for the digital age, this



encourages young people to actively consider how (and where) they might apply their knowledge post-education. Once complete, the portfolios can be used to apply to university or for internships.

Even at home, alternative assessment methods already exist; it's simply that they're not well utilised. The International Baccalaureate goes well beyond assessing academic skills. It aims to develop knowledgeable, inquiring thinkers who are principled, balanced and reflective. The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) – equivalent to 50 per cent of an A-level, in use in many sixth-forms and valued by universities – incorporates essays, project work, presentations and self-directed learning.

Only a year ago, the idea of overhauling assessment would have sent even the most well-intentioned reformers packing. But the uncertain future reformers warned of is now our children's present. In light of everything we've lived through, the challenge feels all the more urgent, but also eminently more achievable.

Opinion

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Lockdown Diary - Vax on. Vax off.



**IAN
THORSTEINSSON**

Executive principal,
Cavendish Education Group



Monday, January 18

Friday, the Battle Of The Lateral Flow Tests erupted. The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is quoted in the press as refusing to license the use of LF tests to test known contacts. Its argument is a body blow: The test is not reliable enough.

But before the knock-out bell had chimed, the DfE was up and releasing a confident statement that they didn't need MHRA's permission anyway.

The MHRA ducked and weaved with a counter-statement crystallising its view that this is not a safe way to conduct this specific testing. Its recommendation: staff and students should isolate for ten days if they are a known contact of a positive case.

Then it turned into a brawl. Our local directors of public health jumped into the ring to side with the MHRA, citing the efficacy of results found during the Liverpool mass-testing programme.

So what's a school leader to do? Clearly, spend the weekend consulting with colleagues, weighing up the pros and cons, risks and control measures, and

redrafting risk assessments.

One of my headteachers is ill. Hardly surprising, given the start of term. And still I am struggling to get them to stop reading their emails and focusing on what is going on in school.

Tuesday, January 19

The week just took an upturn. A local authority email invites all social care workers to book in for a vaccine within 72 hours. A quick call confirms that 'social care workers' is taken to include those working in residential and special schools.

Attendance review. As a large special school, opening to all is simply not possible due to staff absence and other limiting factors. We are keen to ensure we're here for everyone who needs us, which requires daily re-assessment. Communication is key.

Wednesday, January 20

Traumatic call reversing the initial decision to open vaccination for school staff. Most have already booked!

Then, while on a conference call as an NASS trustee, an email comes through from the education

secretary. Daily lateral flow testing of known contacts is 'paused'. More hours we won't get back, but who's counting any more?

Meanwhile, I'm on site at our Leicestershire school which has gone from snowed-in last week to flooded this week. Who said 2021 could only be an improvement?

Thursday, January 21

The weather is competing with DfE for control of the steering wheel. The river keeps rising, and we have already lost a significant amount of land. We can only look on and monitor for safety.

I and other senior leaders have the privilege of dropping in to joyous online lessons. Learning from the first lockdown coupled with our teachers' sheer determination have created something quite special.

Vaccinations are back on, we think. A new email gives renewed hope that we will be on the list to receive it. Given staff in special schools are seven times more likely than other workers to contract Covid, that would be the right call. We await a new booking email.

Friday, January 22

Some time to reflect today as I gaze

on to the flood waters. Nobody signed up for this when they joined the profession, yet every member of our staff has stepped up to it. They have trained themselves to be testers, contact tracers, cleaners, infection control specialists, online learning specialists, Google classroom technicians, therapists, counsellors, weather forecasters and much, much more.

What a privilege it is to be among these people at this time and part of such a united profession. If just some of the connections created through this are sustained into the future, there's no telling what we could achieve.

Postscript. Sunday, January 24

The Times reports that schools will likely be 'closed' until Easter. No minister overtly confirms this in interviews today. None denies it. Testing public response to policy like this is so disruptive to schools. And whatever happened to being 'led by the science'?

An evening call from one of our headteachers. They are buried under a deluge of snow and overnight temperatures are forecast to drop to four degrees below freezing. Roll on Monday.

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Big Gay Adventures in Education: Supporting LGBT+ Visibility and Inclusion in Schools

Author: Daniel Tomlinson-Gray

Publisher: Routledge

Reviewer: Branwen Bingle, head of primary initial teacher education, Newman University

I wanted to love this book for a range of personal and professional reasons. In early 2016 I wrote a blog post for the Cambridge Primary Review Trust website questioning why LGBT people and their families still faced discrimination in schools post Equality Act 2010. Five years on, the scenarios are still all too familiar. LGBT+ people in the UK have often been let down by an education system that at best has not recognised their lived experience, and at worst has failed to protect them from discrimination and prejudice.

Big Gay Adventures in Education promises to celebrate the reality of LGBT+ people working in our schools, colleges and other education settings in a way still considered risky, particularly in the primary sector. As one contributor notes, too frequently the message for LGBT+ people is “Don’t mention it, don’t discuss it and certainly do not disclose your sexual orientation to anyone”.

I was an adult, a parent and a teacher-turned-academic before I really became aware, through my sister’s activism and advocacy for LGBT+ people, of what it means to grow up gay. I learned that coming out doesn’t happen once but every time you choose to disclose to a new acquaintance; I learned of the micro-aggressions and discrimination faced over things as innocuous as holding hands with a loved one; I learned of the lack of role models, the invisibility, the denial of rights and

recognition.

I began to hear stories like the ones found throughout the chapters in *Big Gay Adventures in Education*. These are its strong suit. In its pages lies a crash course in what it’s like to be LGBT+ and live within a “stifling heteronormativity” that isn’t named until the final chapter, but is called out on every page.

As a teacher-educator I take seriously my responsibility as an ally to the LGBT+ community, to hear their stories and to contribute to an inclusive world where they can be their authentic selves. In the pages of *Big Gay Adventures in Education*, the stories are loud and proud and deserve to be shared. This is a book of hope, love and acceptance.

So I wanted to love this book for all these reasons and for all those given for its existence in Andrew Moffat’s foreword and editor Daniel Tomlinson-Gray’s first chapter. If you’re too young to have heard of Section 28, look it up and never forget! From its first pages to its last, this book is nothing if not a chronicle of its damaging legacy for school staff and students.

It took a while for me to warm to this book. This may be because of the order of the chapters. It was only when I got to chapter 6 (‘Permission’) that I really began to

appreciate the content. The chapter is poignant: poor advice by well-meaning (if we’re being charitable) PGCE tutors and colleagues led to the author hiding in plain sight for years. Once their decision was made to hide no more, the headteacher’s response was sensitive and allowed the author the space to come out on their own terms. The reciprocity of respect that results is a lesson for every school community.

Sadly, the skill of the contributors in ‘hooking’ the reader varied. The stories themselves stand as testament to each contributor’s experience, but it is not always clear who the intended audience is. For those seeking advice as to how they might be used in practice, the “Big Gay Notes from the Editor” that follow each chapter do help. These are not necessarily instructions, but offer some assistance in drawing upon the text to create more inclusive education environments.

I didn’t love this book, but I liked it enough to want to see it again. I think over time we’ll be friends. I’m already making plans to introduce it to my students. I hope they’ll appreciate it the way I do, and maybe help me discover more of its strengths.



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is **Naureen Khalid**, chair of governors and trustee, Connect Schools Academy Trust

@5Naureen

Should the chief executive be appointed as a trustee?

@katiecpd

While governors and trustees take a strategic view, a school's executive team has responsibility for its operational leadership. The role of the board is to hold the executive to account. That's why in the charity sector CEOs are generally not appointed to the board. Yet whether this should be the case in schools and academies (which are exempt charities) has been a cause for debate.

In this blog, Katie Paxton argues that the head/principal/CEO should attend board meetings but should not be a trustee, on the grounds that they would in effect be marking their own homework. Paxton also notes the conflicts of interest the practice gives rise to.

The government's latest model articles of association state that heads don't automatically become a trustee as a right. For Paxton, the next logical step is for the DfE to disallow appointment to the board altogether as an important separation of powers. It's a knowledgeable and persuasive argument.

TOP BLOGS of the week

Leadership, a little less distilled

@secretHT1

For all the separation of strategic and operational roles, governors and trustees are still school leaders. This post by the Secret Headteacher unpicks what makes good leaders and should be of interest to them too.

The first thing on the Secret Headteacher's list is putting ego aside. It's an important reminder of the power of humility and that, while they may have earned their position of responsibility, there is a lot they don't know. All governors, and especially chairs, should heed it. The strength of a governing body stems from recognising the knowledge and skills of everyone at the table.

The blog further extols the values of listening, explaining and open discussion, as well as being open to challenge. Governors hold heads to account, but they should be open to challenge themselves to foster good decision making.

Finally, balancing the competing pressures of responsibility and accountability requires trust. The Secret Headteacher reminds us that leadership, after all, is about building relationships. A touch of humanity can go a long way, and this blog certainly has that in spades.

Essentialism

@MaryMyatt

This post also brings a much-needed humanity to proceedings. The present crisis has given us the opportunity to evaluate what we do and why we do it, but it has also created unprecedented pressures. Here, Myatt argues it is time to go back to essentials. On an organisational level, she asks us to refer back to our vision and values. On the personal level, to ask ourselves about the contribution we make and where we can have the maximum impact. Both are crucial to maintaining an effective and adaptable governing body in these uncertain times. The key issue is how.

Myatt's answer is to remind us that sometimes we just have to say no in order to protect ourselves from getting trapped by the "fierce urgency of now". And while it can feel uncomfortable, it can be done with kindness. Myatt's blogs are a consistent model for that.

Contracting Covid-19

@rondelle10_b

Perhaps the dominance of the 'human touch' in my blog selection this week is because of the ongoing saturation of news with Covid statistics. The human stories behind the numbers are often overlooked, and this post by Bukky Yusuf counters that beautifully. Here, she sets out her experiences of contracting the virus. Her description of her illness and what helped her get better physically and mentally (and about 'long Covid') make for a sobering read, not least because she had taken all the recommended precautions and followed all the rules. Yusuf ends by saying that she would rather deal with the disruptions to her life of following the restrictions imposed by government than have to live through the terrible experience again.

There are two important messages here: knowing the range of symptoms Covid can present with, and following the advice given to keep us all safe. Responsibility, accountability and humanity. Pervasive themes for another challenging week in education.

Research

This week, guest researchers Rachel Lofthouse and Mhairi Beaton reveal lessons from their Erasmus+ funded project. Contact them @leedsbeckett with questions or queries

How can teachers' learning contribute to a more inclusive society?

Professor Rachel Lofthouse and Dr Mhairi Beaton, Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University

Few, if any, teachers in the UK work in monolingual, monocultural schools. Every class is a community of learners with a range of individual characteristics and needs. Schools are microcosms of society, playing a key role in developing inclusivity in increasingly diverse communities.

To do justice to this educational objective there is a need for teachers to continually learn and develop practice. This is by no means unique to the UK, and thus learning with and from the international community makes sense.

Promoting Inclusion in Society through Education: Professional Dilemmas in Practice (PROMISE) is an Erasmus+ funded project which we lead from Leeds Beckett University. Our partners are universities, colleges and government agencies in The Netherlands, Germany, Slovenia, Scotland and Hungary working directly with trainee and qualified teachers and school leaders from early years to further education contexts.

The core purpose of the project is the development of relevant resources for professional learning as open-access materials for teacher educators and trainers to share with teachers individually or collectively. The foundation of the new materials is a research and development process undertaken in partnership with practitioners.

Stories of dilemmas faced by teachers form a core part of both the project data and the professional learning resource.

We defined 'professional dilemmas' as practice-orientated challenges that have no obvious solution. Narratives were collected from teachers from all career stages and school phases.



Two examples help here. In one vignette the immediate issue identified by the teacher is challenging behaviour. Through reflection, the teacher goes on to consider how this might be related to the failure of inclusion within schools, including students' experiences of curriculum and pedagogy. In another vignette, a SENCO reflects on the struggle of integrating the work of speech and language therapists supporting a child with their own classroom practice for that child.

The premise is that offering teachers the opportunity to tell these stories permits deeper understanding of how they – and by extension the profession – experience challenges posed by increased diversity in their contexts.

In addition to the professional dilemmas they faced, contributors were also invited to write about the ways in which they had chosen to respond to these challenges. The use of narratives as a data collection tool allowed teachers to express their dilemmas in their own words without the constraints of a standardised research instrument. Our evidence base was thus authentic.

We used the narratives to create 'vignettes' that contained the same information such as educational setting context,

the contributor's level of experience, description of the dilemma and of solutions that had been tried. Thematic analysis of the vignettes enabled us to identify themes arising from the professional dilemmas and the responses to them, and to recognise the significance of the policy contexts, cultural differences and terminology used across the European partners' contexts.

Our findings indicate that educators articulate similar professional challenges. The vignettes were categorised under seven themes: behaviour, inclusion, didactics or pedagogy, classroom management, interprofessional working, digital learning and psychological problems. These themes were not limited to national contexts, career phases or educational sectors.

Issues related to students' challenging behaviour, for example, were reported across all sectors of education, from very young pupils to those undertaking vocational studies in their late teens. But the reality is that solving these problems is far from generic. The vignettes reveal the complexity of the decisions teachers face and the highly contextual nature of solutions.

However, analysis also indicates that one problem-solving tool is near universal. Effective solutions to professional challenges experienced by educators often require collaborative working with and through other professionals.

This study indicates that a new approach to professional learning for inclusion should be adopted. This approach would take as its starting point the complex professional dilemmas that educators articulate, rather than viewing them as discrete issues that can be addressed separately.

Non-judgemental, collaborative and interprofessional learning – where much of the agency for identifying dilemmas and likely solutions is undertaken by the teachers themselves – appears to be the best route to sustainable and effective educational practices.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

MONDAY

An online learning platform set up by Conservative activists scrambled to edit its website following a backlash against comments made by one of its founders.

Invicta Academy, a relatively small outfit based in Kent, suddenly started receiving a lot of attention over the weekend following the publication of a Mail on Sunday interview with its founder Stephen James.

In the interview, James criticised the remote education offering of some state schools and accused teaching unions of encouraging their members not to provide live teaching.

The attention soon turned to senior Conservative politicians who were listed as "sponsors" on the Invicta website. They included education secretary Gavin Williamson and education committee chair Robert Halfon, along with other MPs serving Kent constituencies.

Unsurprisingly, the website was quickly updated on Monday to instead list the politicians as "honorary supporters" and remove any reference to financial support. Halfon told this newspaper he had asked Invicta to clarify his involvement, and we hear Williamson was not best pleased when he saw James's comments.

Invicta's website has also been

updated to remove a number of MPs from its sponsors' list, including Helen Whately, Adam Holloway, Tom Tugendhat, Sir Roger Gale, Helen Grant and Tracey Crouch, who are all Conservative politicians with constituencies in Kent.

Nothing to see here!

TUESDAY

Given Williamson's disastrous media and Commons performances recently, it was perhaps unsurprising to see Nick Gibb sent out to bat for the government during Labour's urgent question on school reopenings. The education secretary was last seen being torn to pieces by

Piers Morgan on the telly last week.

Shadow education secretary Kate Green wasn't too bothered though, saying of Gibb: "I've more hope of receiving answers from him than I'm used to from the secretary of state."

Talk about rubbing salt into the wounds...

THURSDAY

Labour seems unable to make its mind up on vaccinations, simultaneously calling for school staff to be prioritised while also insisting that other groups be first in the queue.

Sir Keir Starmer acknowledged on LBC that scientists advised that "age and vulnerability" were the key factors for vaccination priority, but then defended his call for school staff vaccinations over the half-term break. Make your mind up!

The government was left with egg on its face this week after being forced to withdraw a coronavirus advert which included pictures of women supporting remote learning, doing household chores and looking after a baby.

The advert prompted some to draw parallels with how school closures have "disproportionately" affected women. Another excellent PR job from the government!





HEADTEACHER

Full Time, Permanent, Required for September 2021

Salary L13 - L 19

£56,721 - £65,735

We are looking for an inspirational Headteacher to join our vibrant and bustling school filled with incredible children. We would like a strong leader and team player who will build on the existing strengths of the school and support us on the next steps of our journey. If you think you can be our exceptional candidate, we can't wait to meet you.

We need from you

- A love of teaching and learning
- A passion for developing your team
- Strong, innovative and strategic leadership and management
- A strong commitment to achieving success through partnership and teamwork
- A strong commitment to the values of the school and the Trust
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Drive, ambition and high expectations
- A commitment to ensuring our children achieve their biggest and bravest ambitions.

We can offer you

- Engaged, happy, well-behaved and well-motivated children – we guarantee you will fall in love with them.
- A dedicated, enthusiastic staff team committed to our school and our children and who will support you every step of the way
- High levels of Trust and Governor support – you won't be in this alone when you join the BDATfamily of schools
- A welcoming, friendly and vibrant school
- A career in a forward thinking Trust

Visits to the school are welcomed and encouraged but are by appointment only. We are so proud of our school, we want you to have the chance to visit and see it for yourself. It will convince you so much more than any advert can.

Please contact Jilly Geering (PA to the Director of Primary Education) to arrange your visit via email: recruitment@bdac-academies.org

Timeline

Closing date:	Monday 22nd February 2021	Tour dates:	Thursday 11th February 2021
Shortlisting:	Monday 22nd February 2021		Friday 12th February 2021
Interview: Day 1	Monday 1st March 2021		
Interview: Day 2	Tuesday 2nd March 2021		

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all our children and we require all our staff to share this commitment.

This post is subject to an enhanced criminal records check via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Please see our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy on the BDAT website www.bdat-academies.org/bdat-business/bdat-policies/

For the Full Job Description and Application Form please visit

<https://www.bdat-academies.org/employer-of-choice/vacancies/>

SENCO

Reports to: Executive Director of Learning, Livingstone Academy Bournemouth
Hours: Full time role
Salary: Aspirations Leadership Spine, dependent on experience and qualifications



LIVINGSTONE ACADEMY BOURNEMOUTH
 an Aspirations Academy

Livingstone Academy Bournemouth (LAB) is an innovative new school for children aged 4 to 18 opening in September 2021 in the heart of Bournemouth. Our ambition is to ensure that all young people leave school equipped with the skills and knowledge to thrive in their future lives and careers in the digital age. Young people must be creative, critical thinkers who can create technology as well as consume it.

We are now looking to recruit a SENCO, starting in **September 2021** to work across both phases, for children aged 4 to 18.

Learn more about Livingstone Academy at www.livingstone-aspirations.org

If you consider you are the right person for this role and would like to be a part of the team at such an exciting time then it would be great to hear from you.

Application forms and further details about the role can be downloaded from <https://www.aspirationsacademies.org/work-for-us/>

Email completed application forms to jobs@aspirationsacademies.org

Please note we do not accept CV only applications.

Closing date for applications: Friday 26 February 2021 at 5pm.



Primary Regional Director – Southern

We have an opportunity for an inspirational leader to improve the education of children across our primary schools. On a day-to-day basis, you will line-manage several Headteachers and use your previous experience as a Headteacher to support these leaders in developing improvement provisions, often in challenging contexts.

At United Learning, we work as a team, achieving more by collaborating than any school could on their own. Utilising collective knowledge and facilities to drive visionary results, you will therefore simplify work processes and implement ambitious support

programmes, making the most of leading subject specialists, a group-wide curriculum, our group intranet and extensive CPD opportunities.

You will need a strong track record in school leadership, including coaching others and developing effective improvement strategies. With the chance to oversee group-wide strategic projects, you will bring well-developed relationship-building and influencing skills to the role, and your innovative mindset will deliver impactful change.

Find out more and apply here



We are looking for an energetic, ambitious leader who is looking to take the next step in their career. With a small cohort of pupils, a dedicated staff team, and fully collaborative Trust you will need to

- **Be committed to leading our school towards its vision of delivering exceptional developmental and educational outcomes so that all our pupils can be the best that they can be**
- **Have a clear vision of what excellence is in special educational needs and alternative provision within EYFS & KS1**
- **Be innovative and creative to find solutions to challenges facing schools today**
- **Have the energy, enthusiasm, positivity and resilience to lead and inspire**
- **Always place the needs of our pupils at the centre of all decision-making**
- **Hold a Degree and a Qualified Teacher Status, leadership qualifications are desirable**

Contact Laura Leeder for further information lleder@raedwaldtrust.org



Academy Principal (Full-time role)

Grade: L11 (£52,643) to L15 (£57,986)

St Mary's Primary, Whitstable, a Catholic primary academy and part of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership (KCSP) is seeking to appoint an inspirational and dedicated Academy Principal from September 2021.

Reporting to the Executive Principal, the Academy Principal will be responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the academy and will lead a team that strive together for children under the academy's values of " Joy, Courage, Honesty, Excellence & Community". The successful applicant will take the lead role in providing inspirational Catholic education to our pupils, and we are therefore seeking to appoint a practicing Catholic to this role.

St Mary's, Whitstable is an inclusive two-form entry academy. Its dedicated staff, helpers and Governors work hard to ensure that every student is supported and challenged to be their very best. Serving the Parish of Our Lady Immaculate, Whitstable and the local area, the school's most recent denominational inspection in November 2016 judged it as 'Good' and its most recent Ofsted inspection in April 2018 also judged the academy to be 'Good' in all areas.

Please visit <https://www.kcsp.org.uk/academy-principal/> to view the full job description.

Please send your letter of application, application form and all other related documents to the Executive Principal at: vohalloran@kcsp.org.uk

Your letter of application should be limited to 1,000 words max. and should outline why you feel you are suited to this role, what you believe you can bring to the academy and also detail your experience to date, skill set and qualifications.

Offers of employment are subject to an enhanced disclosure and barring service check and section 128 check.

Closing date for applications: 05 March 2021 @ 5pm

Interviews will be held on: 19 March 2021

Start date: 01 September 2021

www.st-marys-whitstable.kent.sch.uk

Teaching Posts, permanent and full time



LIVINGSTONE ACADEMY BOURNEMOUTH
an Aspirations Academy

Livingstone Academy Bournemouth (LAB) is an innovative new school for children aged 4 to 18 opening in September 2021 in the heart of Bournemouth. Our ambition is to ensure that all young people leave school equipped with the skills and knowledge to thrive in their future lives and careers in the digital age. Young people must be creative, critical thinkers who can create technology as well as consume it.

We are now looking to recruit to the following teaching posts required for **September 2021**:

Primary phase:

Reception

Secondary phase:

English
Maths
Science
Spanish
Art/Design/Technology

Salary: Unless otherwise indicated, Aspirations MPS or UPS, subject to relevant previous experience.

As LAB grows to full capacity over the next few years, we are

looking to recruit professionals who have the mindset to deliver and model an education fit for this fast-changing world. We will appoint teachers who are prepared and able to teach outside of their own subject, plan learning in teams and who are excited about being trained in computational thinking. Essentially LAB teachers and leaders need to be creative and flexible. If you are interested in finding out about the full details of the nature of the teaching role at LAB please request further information.

Learn more about Livingstone Academy at

www.livingstone-aspirations.org

If you consider you are the right person for this role and would like to be a part of the team at such an exciting time then it would be great to hear from you.

Application forms and further details about the role can be downloaded from <https://www.aspirationsacademies.org/work-for-us/>

Closing date for applications: Friday 26 February 2021 at 5pm.



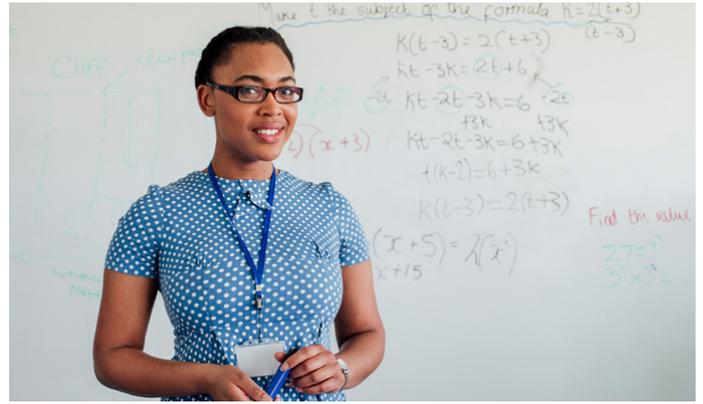
Director of Student Services and Safeguarding

Tenure: Permanent
Salary: £65,000 per annum
Closing Date: 22nd February 2021

West London College is looking for a highly experienced, knowledgeable and skilled Director of Student Services and Safeguarding to lead and manage our cross-college Student Services provision, acting as the college's Designated Safeguarding Lead. This role will lead on the implementation of excellent safeguarding procedure and practice and the college's Prevent strategy and action plan, to promote a safe college environment.

The successful candidate will work closely with the Executive Team and sit on the Senior Leadership team, leading on and implementing the College's strategy for provision of high quality learner facing services, ensuring they represent the college's diverse community. An experienced and inspirational leader of staff with significant experience at a senior leadership level, you will have experience of communicating at a high level and writing reports for the Executive team and governors.

Please visit www.wlc.ac.uk/jobs for further information.



Head of English and Maths

Tenure: Permanent
Salary: up to GBP 56,640
Closing Date: 21st February 2021

We are seeking an experienced Further Education Manager who can deliver continuous improvement of our English and Maths (E&M) provision. Leading on raising standards in the learning, teaching and assessment of E&M with operational and strategic responsibility for provision across all four College sites. Covering all aspects of curriculum planning and operations and advocate a culture of continuous improvement.

You will be an excellent leader and manager who is able to develop and implement a College wide strategy for E&M. Using innovative approaches to teaching and learning that meets the needs of a multi-cultural community. You should also be able to prepare and lead teams through internal and external inspections, manage budgets and meet student recruitment and achievement targets.

Please visit www.wlc.ac.uk/jobs for further information.



Saint GREGORY'S
Bath

"In Christ we flourish"

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

Deputy Headteacher

We require a forward-thinking and inspirational colleague to join our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) from September 2021. The Deputy Headteacher will be instrumental in the strategic management of our school, helping to lead and develop it as a centre for excellence in Catholic secondary education, whilst ensuring the best possible outcomes for all our young people.

The successful candidate will bring professionalism and academic credibility, balanced with warmth and sensitivity, to work across the school to create a common vision of excellence, helping to make Saint Gregory's a truly exceptional place to learn and work in.

Salary: Leadership Scale L20 - L24

The closing date is midnight on **Sunday 28 February 2021**

Interviews will be held W/C **Monday 8 March 2021**

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

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



A MEMBER OF **the evolvetrust**
 Ambitious Future

PRINCIPAL

The Harlow Academy, a member of The Evolve Trust, is an amazing one form entry special school of 80 pupils aged 3-18 offering an innovative 21st century curriculum. The school requires an outstanding Principal who is committed to every child and young person receiving a first class education, one which inspires our schools' communities to achieve more than they thought possible. The school benefits greatly from being part of the Evolve Trust, a highly regarded, values driven, academy trust who are passionate about improving children's life chances through quality education. The school is at the heart of its community and works alongside families to ensure that children can be the very best versions of themselves and develop into responsible citizens of the future.

For more information and how to apply visit
<https://www.wildsearch.org/opportunities/evolve> & email to evolve@wildsearch.org

Deadline: **midday Monday 1st March**



We are looking for inspirational leaders to join our team in Cornwall –
PRINCIPAL AT CARRICK (THREEMILESTONE)
PRINCIPAL AT RESTORMEL (ST AUSTELL)

WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO YOU?



Here's what matters to us:

BEING POSITIVE - We value positivity, no matter what the circumstances. It is our intention to stay constructive, optimistic and confident both for and with our young people and their families.

HAVING EMPATHY - We are kind, we have empathy. We consider the consequences of our decisions, large and small on those around us.

SHOWING RESPECT - We conduct ourselves in ways that earn the trust of those around us. We respect each other and those we work with.

WORKING AS ONE TEAM - We depend on teamwork and the relationships we have. When we work together we are stronger. Together we will achieve more.

BEING INCLUSIVE - That everybody is treated fairly and equally; no-one is marginalised or left behind. We are inclusive, we embrace the human spirit. We value diversity of people and thought.

We are committed to progressing the social, emotional and academic outcomes for all of our students to enable them to achieve their true potential. Our Vision is to significantly change pupil lives for the better. Our values, as a Trust, empower our young people to succeed, these values are at the core of everything we do, and embody what we are looking for when we seek new colleagues.

If you are up to it, come join us

Wave Multi Academy Trust comprises eleven AP academies and two special schools in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. Our regional APs provide education for mainstream pupils who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion or on an intervention basis. All of our schools have been consistently judged to be good or outstanding.

We are looking for two inspirational leaders to join our team in Cornwall

As a result of internal promotions, we are looking to appoint two outstanding and enthusiastic Principals whose purpose will be to provide professional leadership and management within these academies. Both schools are currently judged to be Good. The successful candidates will work alongside the Executive Principal to lead a successful education team, providing vision, leadership and direction for the continuing development and improvement of their academies.

So, who are we looking for?

As well as someone who embodies our values, we are looking for someone who:

- has a comprehensive understanding of the needs of our cohort, including pupils who may be coping with trauma and attachment issues.
- has thorough understanding around teaching and learning and is committed to further developing the quality of teaching in the school.
- has the skills to lead, improve and inspire both pupils and staff
- is an excellent communicator, and able to build effective partnerships with families, staff, partner schools, outside agencies and the wider community

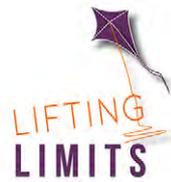
We are a values based trust that cares passionately for our pupils their families and our colleagues. Wave Trust is in a strategic partnership with Cornwall Council, that is enabling us to think long term about how to continue to innovate to meet the needs of the pupils and schools in Cornwall.

Cornwall is a beautiful place to live and work and the Wave family are a great group to work with. Wave MAT is dedicated to the safeguarding of children and Safer Recruitment Procedures will be followed. The position requires a satisfactory enhanced DBS check.

For an informal discussion please contact Lianne Ward (Executive Principal) on lward@waveedu.org. To request an application pack please use the link on www.wavemat.org

Start date: 01/04/2021
Salary: up to £66,031.00





HEAD OF EDUCATION ROLE – DO YOU HAVE THE EXPERIENCE TO HELP GROW A BOLD NEW CHARITY?

Lifting Limits is seeking an experienced primary school practitioner with leadership experience and understanding of the primary school sector for a new senior role as Head of Education. We are a charity with a mission to challenge gender stereotyping and promote gender equality, in and through education. The Head of Education will have responsibility for all our educational content and will help us build on the success of our pilot year and scale our model to reach significant numbers of schools.

Salary: £45,000 p.a. (full time equivalent)

Hours: part time, 3 days (or equivalent hours) per week

Based: London, home and mobile

Deadline for applications: 15th February.

For full details of the role and to apply visit our website <https://www.liftinglimits.org.uk/contact-us/>.



Human Resources Business Manager and Caseworker

Learn@ MAT is a specialist multi-academy trust of 5 Academies, based in the South West. The Trust is going through an exciting period of growth and will be 8 academies by September 2023.

We are seeking to appoint a member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development to take lead responsibility for Human Resources within our central executive team. This will be a pivotal role in the development of HR and the management of personnel across the Trust. This is a new post and therefore a great opportunity for someone to really make their mark as the organisation grows.

If you are interested in this post please contact Peter Evans, CEO to arrange a discussion **Peter.Evans@learnmat.uk**

Due to safeguarding requirements we are not able to accept CVs. Application packs are available on our website: **<https://www.learnmat.uk/page/?title=Join+our+teams&pid=41>**

Completed application forms should be sent to **info@learnmat.uk** by 3rd February 2021

Closing date: 3rd February 2021
Interviews: 11th or 12th February 2021

EDU WEEK JOBS SCHOOLS WEEK

NEW YEAR OFFERS

EXTENDED

Click here to get in touch

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- ◆ Unlimited Featured Listings
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£4000

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Advert in Schools Week + Featured Job of the Week, our top online slot.

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Featured Job of the Week

~~£745~~
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Featured Job of the Week

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Featured Job of the Week

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Classified Advertising – 10% off

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£355

HALF PAGE

~~£595~~
£535

FULL PAGE

~~£745~~
£670