

SCHOOLS WEEK

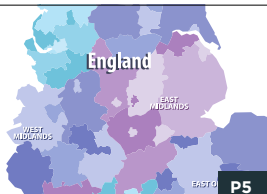
A digital newspaper determined to get past the bluster and explain the facts.

From serial
volunteer to serial
charity CEO



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NTP's regional
challenge
revealed



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'Nonsensical'
attendance league
table plan still on
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Reopening: Are
some objections
reasonable?



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FRIDAY, MAR 5 2021 | EDITION 242

SOS: WILLIAMSON PROMISES TO BACK TEACHERS OVER EXAMS



Ed sec tells Schools Week...

- He's backing teachers 'all the way' on grading
- He'll take his share of the blame if there's another results day backlash
- He accepts Covid cases will disrupt schools when they reopen
- The country is making a 'difficult sacrifice' to open schools first

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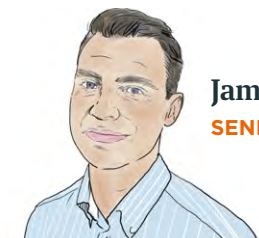
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'We're backing teachers all the way'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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EXCLUSIVE

The education secretary has pledged to back teachers "all the way" in their efforts to award GCSE and A-level grades this summer, and accepted he will share the responsibility if there is a backlash on results days.

In an exclusive interview with *Schools Week* this week, Gavin Williamson said the government was putting its "confidence and faith in teacher judgment" and said a "robust appeals structure" would help deal with potential "challenges" with the system.

Exams have been cancelled this year following the decision to partially close schools in January. The government last week confirmed its plans to base grades on teacher assessments, prompting fears teachers could be left to shoulder the blame if there is another upset this year.

The government was forced into a last-minute U-turn last year on its decision to award grades based on centre assessments adjusted by computer algorithm.

Ministers have ruled out using an algorithm this summer, but there are concerns that relying on teacher assessment will lead to disparities between schools and grade inflation.

Williamson told *Schools Week* the government was "absolutely supporting teachers" and pointed to plans to publish guidance to help with grading and for exam boards to provide additional support.

"It's why we'll be putting both the internal quality assurance and external quality assurance [in place] and absolutely backing teachers all the way on this," he said.

"We want to make sure this works and, of course, everyone has a responsibility for the structures that have been put in place and, of course, myself included in that."

However, the education secretary said the government would take a "very serious view" of malpractice. Exam boards are to look for this when they conduct the external quality assurance process, including via checks that will be triggered where schools have previously received sanctions for malpractice.



Gavin Williamson

"Everyone has a responsibility... myself included"

"People do have to have responsibility for what they're putting forward and that's why we've put those checks and balances in place," he said.

"We'd expect everyone to adhere to the high professional standards that we always see within the teaching profession. But where there are things that aren't quite right we will absolutely take action in order to be able to deal with that."

Schools are due to reopen more widely from next week, with secondary schools allowed to phase the return to facilitate requirements for mass testing.

However, the decision to bring all pupils back to school in the same week has prompted fears of a return to the situation seen last autumn, when schools were regularly forced to send large groups of pupils home because of a confirmed Covid case.

Williamson said he accepted that there "will be children and there will be teachers who will have to isolate, but that's exactly as you would expect as we are still dealing with a pandemic".

But he said the number of children having to isolate "fell dramatically over the first four weeks of full return in September, and we'd hope to keep a similar sort of level of practice there".

Attendance data published by the DfE for the autumn term do indeed show rising attendance rates during the first month back after summer, but numbers went into freefall from November as infection rates rose nationally.

Williamson said the country had made a "difficult sacrifice to not bring other parts of the country back before schools" in order to "safeguard education".

"Anyone who understands what's best for a child recognises that actually they learn best and they are in the best possible position to succeed by getting them back into the classroom.

"That's where our focus has been and we've taken a decision not to bring anything else back other than children into the classroom because we've always said it's our national priority to get children back into class."

EXCLUSIVE

Data reveals scale of NTP's northern challenge

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

New data has revealed big variations in take-up of the government's National Tutoring Programme across England, with schools in the south far more likely to have enrolled their pupils than those in the north.

Figures provided by the NTP show the scheme has reached 100 per cent of its target number of schools in the south-west of England and 96.1 per cent in the south-east, but just 58.8 per cent in the north-east, 58.9 per cent in Yorkshire and the Humber and 59.3 per cent in the north-west.

Though lower than in the south-west and south-east, take-up-rates in London were higher than in the north, the east of England and the Midlands.

The NTP set a target of reaching 6,000 schools across the nine regions through the tuition partners pillar, currently run by the Education Endowment Foundation.

The programme confirmed this week it had reached around 4,200 schools – 70 per cent of its national target – as of February 26.

Launched last year, the NTP provides heavily subsidised tutoring sessions aimed at disadvantaged pupils.

However, it was revealed this week that just 49 per cent of those accessing the tutoring sessions are eligible for the pupil premium.

Officials had previously admitted that take-up was lower in the north of England, but the new figures show the true scale of the challenge for the first time.

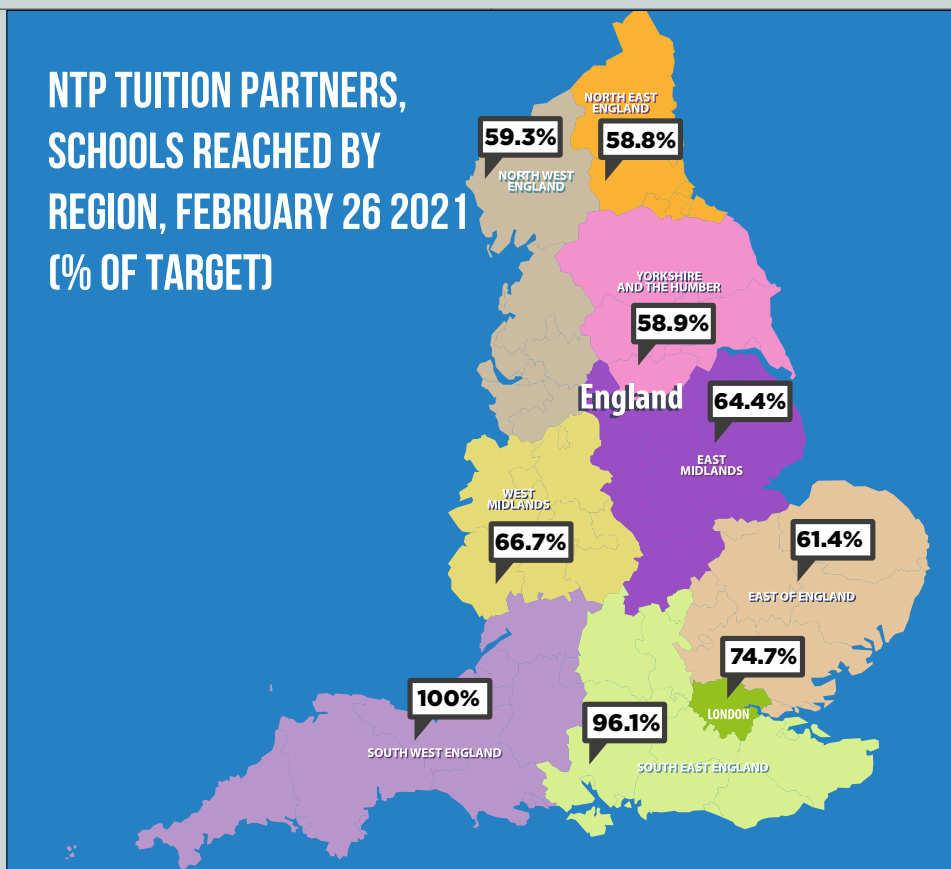
The NTP told Schools Week it had expected some variation in take-up between regions, and that it anticipates it will reach its targets in all parts of the country by the end of the year.

A spokesperson said the use of private tuition had historically been more prevalent in the south, and schools in the regions “may have more familiarity with using tutoring to support their pupils”.

They also pointed out that northern England had seen greater disruption during the pandemic “preventing schools from putting plans in place and knowing when interventions can be successfully deployed”.

“The NTP is designed to address the regional variations in supply by building the supply of high-quality tutoring across the country,

NTP TUITION PARTNERS, SCHOOLS REACHED BY REGION, FEBRUARY 26 2021 (% OF TARGET)



so that schools in every region can access its support.”

But critics say there are not enough tutoring providers “with strong ties to northern schools” in the scheme.

Sarah Mulholland, head of policy at the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, said this “wasn’t helped by the government choosing a very narrow definition of subject tutoring, meaning providers who had asked schools what they actually wanted which was often to address the specific issues caused by the pandemic, such as mental health problems, were cut out”.

Chris Zarraga, director of Schools North East, which represents about 1,150 schools in the region, said applying a “one-size-fits all approach” to tutoring did not take into account “huge regional differences, including the significant levels of long-term, high-impact disadvantage in the north-east, which has been exposed and exacerbated by Covid-19”.

“Any recovery programme needs to be flexible to allow school leaders to identify where the gaps are, and properly support students in their mental and emotional development, not just academic ‘catch-up’”

Last week, Graham Archer, the Department for Education’s director of qualifications, curriculum and extra-curricular, said they were using their regional teams to “push hard” the message of the benefits of tutoring.

The NTP also revealed this week that just 49 per cent of pupils enrolled for tutoring are eligible for the pupil premium.

However, EEF chief executive Professor Becky Francis told MPs on Tuesday that schools had the flexibility to put pupils forward who had “become vulnerable during the pandemic, as very many have, as you know, or have particularly fallen behind during the pandemic”.

Natalie Perera, the Education Policy Institute’s chief executive, said she would expect the other half of pupils accessing tutoring to be considered vulnerable in some other way or to have lost significant amounts of learning over the last year, but said it was “essential” to see the data.

A DfE spokesperson said they were committed to ensuring the NTP reaches “as many disadvantaged pupils as possible” and continue to encourage take-up in areas hard hit by the pandemic.

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News

EXCLUSIVE



League tables could include summer term attendance

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

The government has not ruled out using attendance data for the summer term in school league tables, despite backing off on "nonsensical" plans to include the autumn and spring terms.

The Department for Education confirmed last week that it no longer intended to include attendance data collected between last September and this Easter.

But when asked by *Schools Week* whether data for the summer term would be included, it said it would confirm its plans later, depending on the public health situation.

In December, the DfE announced exam results would not be included in league tables this year because of the disruption caused by the pandemic.

Performance data would instead include information on subjects taken, pupil destinations and attendance.

Last week the department announced it was changing its plans, following the partial school closures in January as England entered its third lockdown.

Updated accountability guidance says that "given rising infection rates in late 2020 and the decision to suspend mandatory attendance in early 2021, we no longer intend to publish attendance based on autumn term 2020 and spring term 2021 for key stage 1 to key stage 4 in performance tables".

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the heads' union ASCL, said it was pleased the government would not use data from the autumn and spring terms. It was "patently nonsensical in the first place".

But it would be "similarly nonsensical to use attendance data based on the summer term, given that schools are completely at the mercy of local infection rates", he said.

Barton called for clarification as soon as possible to free schools of "unnecessary accountability clutter".

Loic Menzies, the chief executive of the Centre for Education and Youth, said it was difficult to see how summer attendance data would give any useful information. The government might be trying to "incentivise schools to put as much effort as possible in getting pupils into schools".

This was misguided as "every school without a doubt is going to be focusing on that already...a potentially punitive measure isn't necessarily going to help anyone".

Updated guidance also revealed that institution-level data, including GCSEs and A-level results, would not be available for organisations such as Ofsted, regional schools commissioners or local authorities to use to hold schools and colleges to account.

Instead, those working with schools should "use the data from previous years as a starting point for discussions on performance".

It also stated results' data from 2020 and 2021 would not be used as criteria for areas such as teaching schools and free school applications. Schools also should not use the data as part of their teacher performance management.

The DfE also changed its plan to allow 2021 qualifications to count towards performance measures in future years. For example, data for those entering GCSEs early in year 10 in 2021 would not be included in any school level data in 2022.

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Extra supplies on their way as Halfon warns of 'mask anarchy'

JAMES CARR
@JAMESCARR_93

Secondary schools and colleges will receive up to 7,500 disposable masks from the government after it recommended that face coverings be worn in secondary classrooms.

But leaders say many parents harbour "significant anti-mask" sentiments, with schools facing "mask anarchy" after ministers confirmed they were recommended, but not mandatory, in secondary classes.

Schools and FE colleges will receive the extra supplies to cover their "contingency stock" for pupils who do not bring in their own masks.

Each will receive between 5,000 and 7,500 masks by the end of next week. Some may receive further stock "depending on the size of the establishment".

The masks are supposed to last until the Easter holidays, when the guidance will be reviewed. The DfE said it estimated there would be enough as most staff and pupils "will already have access to face coverings from their wider use in society".

Masks were previously only recommended in the indoor communal areas of secondary schools.

Micon Metcalfe, the chief finance officer at the Diocese of Westminster Academy Trust, said she believed the masks would last as most pupils had their own or schools had branded varieties as part of their uniform.

The bigger issue was a "significant anti-mask parental community". Schools were concerned the government's guidance would "cause conflicts with families schools normally have a good relationship with".

Robert Halfon, the chair of the education select committee, warned the Commons on Monday that the government was in danger of creating "mask anarchy" and was placing enormous pressure on headteachers by not providing clear directions.

"Is it not better to come down firmly on one side or another and provide clearly definitive regulations to help teaching staff?"

Councils have been told not to force primary pupils to wear masks, following reports that the London borough of Redbridge had asked its schools to go beyond official advice.

News

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Pupils may need to repeat year, says exam board boss

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Some pupils may need to repeat a year if they have missed too much learning to be awarded grades this year, an exam board chief has said.

Jill Duffy, the chief executive of OCR, said a "small number" of young people might have "lost so much learning that it would be difficult to award them a grade at all".

The government has confirmed that grades will be based on teacher assessment this year, with no requirements about the minimum amount of content that should be taught or assessed.

But in submitting their grades to exam boards, headteachers will have to declare that pupils have been taught "sufficient content" to allow them to progress to the next stage in their education.

Duffy told a Westminster Education Forum seminar this week it was imperative to be "entirely honest" that some pupils might not be awarded a grade.

"This may seem harsh, but it would be very wrong to place someone on a course for which they are ill-prepared, where they will struggle to keep up with their peers and which they may not complete."

Duffy said students without grades would need support.

"We will need to provide whatever it takes to give these young people, who will be in the

minority, the chance to catch up. This could be through summer schools, or it could be that such students if they wish, should have the opportunity to retake a full year of study."

In any normal year, some pupils are "ungraded" in one or multiple subjects. However, the proportion fell dramatically last year, following the move to centre-assessment grades.

In 2020 in England, just 0.2 per cent of A-levels and 0.4 per cent of GCSEs were ungraded, compared with 2.1 per cent and 1.5 per cent the year before.

Ofqual said it could not predict how many U-grades would be issued this year.

But a spokesperson said it was important to acknowledge the limitations of assessment to mitigate the pandemic's impact on teaching and learning.

"We will not know until results are issued the extent to which the different impacts of the pandemic on students' education will affect their results."

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the head's union ASCL, said a minority of pupils might have experienced "such severe learning loss" that they would struggle to progress to their next stage of study without significant support.

Schools should decide on the appropriate course of action, with the pupil and their parents or carers.



"Repeating a year is a particularly significant decision that would be very carefully considered and planned before being undertaken."

The Department for Education said it was up to heads to decide whether pupils needed to repeat a year.

Professor Barnaby Lenon, a member of Ofqual's standards advisory group, said it was clearly "the government's intention" that most students would be able to progress to their next stage.

But he added that if they had missed a significant part of their course "it would seem to me perfectly sensible for them to repeat the year".

Festival of Education goes virtual this year

This year's Festival of Education will take place online and will be free to watch.

It was hoped that the June event, which was cancelled last year because of the pandemic, would go ahead on its usual site at Wellington College in Berkshire. But plans have been adapted following government guidance.

The virtual festival will take place across two weeks between June 16 and 30, rather than over two days.

There will be daily keynote speakers and two CPD days, known as "Friday Fests", that will include more than 50 workshops on June 18 and June 25. These sessions will follow a similar format to a traditional seminar or panel discussion and will cover a "wide range of topics within education".

Shane Mann, the festival director, said: "We



were hoping to be able to return to Wellington College this summer.

"However, we are excited to be able to provide a Festival of Education online this June and that it will be free for all to watch and join in."

Mann said organisers hoped it would be a "fun and inspiring festival" after an "unfathomably challenging year" for educators.

The event is free thanks to the support of

Wellington College, headline partner Pearson and other sponsors.

The festival was launched by Wellington College in 2010 and is now held in partnership with Lsect, the publisher of *Schools Week* and our sister paper *FE Week*.

In June 2019, the tenth festival hosted more than 5,000 teachers and 300 speakers across two days.

James Dahl, the master of Wellington College, said: "We were so disappointed that the event had to be cancelled in 2020. This year, if the grounds of Wellington cannot be flooded with a sea of white marquees, then we will deliver the next best thing and launch the event online."

Registration for Friday Fests is now open. Registration for keynote sessions will open when the speakers are announced.

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'Little mention' of education in 2021 budget

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

This year's budget has been described as a "missed opportunity" for education after it failed to provide additional cash for schools.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak (pictured) focused on measures to help the country recover economically from the pandemic, extending the furlough scheme until September and raising incentives to hire apprentices.

But there was no extra funding for schools beyond existing planned budget increases and catch-up schemes already announced.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the ASCL school leaders' union, said it was "disappointing that in a budget focused on national recovery... so little mention has been made of the role of education".

"We believe that education is a vital part of the national recovery and that the chancellor should have used this budget to set out the government's spending plan for catch-up support over the

remainder of this parliament."

Barton said he had also hoped more money would have been given to schools and colleges hit by the significant additional costs of the pandemic.

"Instead, education was scarcely mentioned, despite the government's insistence that it is a national priority. This budget was a missed opportunity to back-up warm words with a concrete spending plan."

The government has already announced plans to increase overall school spending by £2.2 billion in 2021-22 and £2.3 billion in 2022-23.

Budget documents confirm that the government will spend £1.7 billion on initiatives to help pupils catch up following partial school closures.

This includes the £1 billion package announced last year – a £650 million catch-up premium for schools and £350 million for the government's

flagship National Tutoring Programme (NTP) and academic mentors' scheme.

Ministers last week announced a further £705 million for catch-up, including a £302 million recovery premium, £200 million for summer schools in secondaries and £203 million for more tutoring and early years support.

However, as revealed by Schools Week, subsidies for tutoring provided through the NTP could "taper" off, with schools expected to pay 90 per cent of the costs by 2023.

The budget document states that total Covid-19 funding for education amounted to £2.1 billion in the 2020-21 financial year, and will come to £800 million in 2021-22.

A full breakdown is not provided, but it does include previously announced capital funding, money for free school meals and for "skills and training measures" on top of the catch-up funding provided.



DfE cuts funding rates for ECF rollout

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

The government has cut funding rates for the national rollout of its early career framework (ECF), claiming this year's teacher pay freeze means it will cost less to take new teachers out of the classroom. The Department for Education has confirmed this week that schools outside London will receive £2,100 for each pair of early career teachers and mentors as it rolls out the framework across England from September.

This is almost five per cent less than the £2,200 in funding pledged for schools in the initial rollout last year.

The department said the reduction in funding was a result of the pay freeze for teachers announced last year, which it said meant the cost of taking new teachers out of the classroom would be "lower than previously forecast".

The money is supposed to pay for a five per cent timetable reduction for staff in their second year of teaching and to release more experienced teachers for 20 hours of mentoring

over a year.

There is also additional funding available over and above these rates for enhanced training and a further 36 hours of mentoring – but only for those schools that sign up to work with one of six providers approved by the DfE.

Ministers announced this week that the Ambition Institute, Best Practice Network, Capita (with the University of Birmingham), the Education Development Trust, Teach First and the UCL Institute of Education would be funded to deliver the support. Schools working with these partners will get "additional funding" for the "time mentors of early career teachers will spend on the provider-led mentor training".

This will consist of "36 hours of backfill time over two years per mentor". This will be over and above the base funding rates, which are for all schools irrespective of who designs their ECF provision.

Schools can opt not to work with the partner organisations – they can either deliver their own training using DfE-accredited materials and resources, or design and deliver their own ECF-based induction.



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Investigates

Reimposed absence rules will 'pit heads against parents'

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The decision to reintroduce school absence enforcement will "pit heads against parents" and risks costly legal action from families that include shielding members, it has been warned.

All schools are due to reopen next week. The government has said attendance will be mandatory for primary pupils from Monday and for secondary pupils from the following week, after a period of flexibility to allow for mass testing.

School leaders have been told that all pupils must attend unless they are self-isolating due to coronavirus or because they are required to shield.

Children who live with vulnerable relatives are still expected to go in, despite their family members being told to continue shielding at least until the end of March.

As in normal times, headteachers will have the discretion to authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances". In its response to a legal challenge last year, the government said that this could cover families that kept their children at home out of fears for their own health.

But families with shielding members who plan to keep their children at home say that a lack of clear guidance will leave schools feeling duty-bound to pursue absence with fines or through the courts.

Unions fear rows with parents

School leadership unions say the reintroduced enforcement risks conflict between their members and families.

Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the change "clearly places school leaders in a difficult position if a family is anxious about the risks posed by the virus and decides to keep a child at home".

"There is some flexibility for absences to be authorised in 'exceptional circumstances', but this isn't defined in normal times, let alone the current situation. It would be difficult to provide a list of criteria that would cover all eventualities."

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said fines were "unlikely" to change the minds of parents



concerned about safety "and may only serve to drive an unnecessary wedge between the family and the school".

Absence rules were suspended last March when schools partially closed and continued to be waived until the end of the school year. However, they were reimposed in September and only suspended again once the current lockdown was announced.

A Schools Week investigation last autumn found that although the number of penalties issued for school absence crashed by 90 per cent in the first half of the autumn term, councils still issued thousands of fines.

DfE says heads can authorise absence

The Public Interest Law Centre last year threatened the Department for Education with legal action on behalf of vulnerable parents who were facing action for keeping their children out of school.

In its response to the centre's letter, the Government Law Department admitted a blanket rule for children of shielding parents "would not be appropriate", and said that Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, considered that it was "right that there is local discretion in this matter".

The response said that absences could be authorised beyond the "specific examples" set out in official guidance and could cover a pupil whose absence a headteacher felt was merited.

The Public Interest Law Centre advised families to write to schools and councils requesting they

exercise discretion. If heads or councils decided not to authorise absence, they "may be open to legal challenge".

The main claimant in the law centre's case was Caroline Lea, a teacher and parent whose treatment for severe asthma has weakened her immune system.

Lea faced enforcement action after she kept her children out of school and educated them at home throughout the autumn term.

The action was suspended after the law centre began its legal battle and has not resumed during the recent period of partial closures. But Lea said it could start again as she intended to keep her children at home from next week.

"We have attendance rules and as a teacher I respect every letter of them, but we're in exceptional times. We are being punished under laws that weren't written for this. They were written for truants, they were written for whimsical holidays in term time. This is me trying to fight for my life."

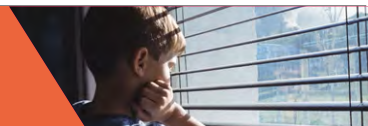
Government being 'deliberately' vague

Mark McDonald, a human rights barrister from Furnival Chambers, said he represented a small number of families, and had offered to represent other parents pro-bono if they faced legal action for keeping their children away from school to protect shielding relatives.

He said the government could "quite easily suspend the issue of the attendance register

Continued on next page

Investigates



punishment, but it doesn't want to".

"It's a deliberate policy on its part to be vague and leave it up to the head. And it pits heads against parents."

He said the government should continue to suspend the legislation that triggered fines.

"It needs to keep it suspended until every clinically vulnerable person has the second dose of the vaccine."

Heads are required to record absences. Any enforcement action is carried out by local authorities on their behalf.

As revealed by *Schools Week* last autumn, approaches to absence enforcement have varied across the country.

In many cases, families reported that action that had begun during the autumn term was suspended after the partial school closures in January.

However, even with schools partially closed this term, some families have still faced threats of legal action.

Families contacted by councils

Emails from January seen by *Schools Week* show how Nottinghamshire County Council emailed one parent who kept her children out of school in the autumn term because they lived with a clinically extremely vulnerable relative.

In one email, the council warned that "if the concerns around attendance persist when schools are open again to all pupils, then, if necessary, legal action may commence".

This was despite an acknowledgment of "positive" engagement of her children with remote education.



"The rulebook can't deal with a scenario like mine"

The parent, who asked not to be named, said she was concerned that the discretion afforded to heads had "not filtered down".

"Maybe it's because they've said they're going to monitor attendance, and that's why schools don't feel free."

She said the rules should be waived so that, providing parents could prove their children were engaging with home learning and there were no safeguarding concerns, they could keep them at home for a longer period.

Philip Owen, chair of Nottinghamshire's children and young people's committee, said its family service had been "keeping in touch with parents and carers who have previously been referred to us by their child's school because of concerns about poor attendance".

"This is to encourage parents to ensure their children engage with any online learning that their school have put in place." The decision on whether to take action "ultimately" lay with heads.

"Decisions to start legal action are never taken lightly and are usually considered to be a last resort."

Sughra Nazir, a social worker who is clinically vulnerable, initially sent her two children back to school last September, but pulled them out by early November after they were sent home several times after close contact with a Covid case.

"The rulebook wasn't there to say how to deal with a scenario like mine," she told *Schools Week*.

"When schools reopen, people like myself are still going to have to be in that position where we're going to have to navigate that space between policy and interpretation within schools."

A recent survey by the charity Parentkind found 69 per cent of parents were not confident that schools fully reopening this month would be safe for their families, with 53 per cent saying they are "not at all confident".

But a Department for Education spokesperson said absence rules would apply from next Monday because "being in school is the best place for children's education and wellbeing".

"Where parents have concerns about their child's attendance at school, we ask that they discuss their concerns with the school. As usual, schools have the ability to authorise leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances."

Spot the difference

What the official guidance states...

"The usual rules on school attendance apply... As usual, you are responsible for recording attendance, following up absence and reporting children missing education to the local authority.

"It is likely that some pupils, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about attending school. This may include pupils who...live in a household where someone is clinically vulnerable (CV) or CEV [clinically extremely vulnerable].

"Discuss any concerns with parents and provide reassurance on the measures you are

putting in place to reduce any risks. Remind parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies."

What the government said in its response to the Public Interest Law Centre

"...a blanket rule for children of CEV or shielding parents would not be appropriate. The secretary of state considers that it is right that there is local discretion in this matter.

"Absence can be authorised by school headteachers, and/or recorded as authorised

in attendance registers, beyond the specific examples set out in the...guidance. That can cover the situation you explain your client is in, if the relevant headteacher considers your client's situation merits authorising the absence from school of her child.

"Whether leave of absence is granted is determined by each individual school headteacher. This is a matter of local decision-making. The secretary of state does not seek to lay down a blanket rule for headteachers in all circumstances where a parent keeps his or her child at home due to concerns as to possible infection of family members."

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**SCHOOLS
WEEK**

News



School staff miss out on priority for Covid vaccine

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

Most school staff will have to wait at least six weeks to get their Covid-19 vaccines after the government announced it would stick to an age-based approach rather than prioritising frontline workers.

Analysis by *Schools Week* suggests that about one in five teachers will have been offered a jab by mid-April, when the second phase of the immunisation programme is due to start.

Ministers confirmed last Friday that they would continue to prioritise older people, fearing that an occupation-based approach could "slow" the programme.

Matt Hancock, the health secretary, last month said that teachers had a "very strong case" to go to the head of the queue, while Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said he was lobbying for prioritisation.

But the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisations said last week that targeting occupational groups would be "more complex" and could leave some more vulnerable people at higher risk "unvaccinated for longer".

The government is aiming to offer everyone over 50, as well as younger people with certain underlying health conditions, a vaccine by April 15.

In phase two, people in their forties will be injected first, followed by those aged 30 to 39. Eighteen to 29-year-olds will be vaccinated last, with the government aiming to give all adults the jab by July 31. The vaccines are not approved for children.

According to the 2019 school workforce

statistics, about 81 per cent of teachers are aged 49 and below. The largest cohort – a third – are aged between 30 and 39.

Just 18 per cent are aged 50 and over and therefore eligible for the vaccine before mid-April. The fifth of teachers under 30 will be last to get the jab.

However, some younger teachers with underlying health conditions will get priority, although there is no data on how many this will affect.

There are caveats to the workforce data. The government warns headcount figures for teacher characteristics should not be used as a measure of the overall size of the school workforce. The full-time-equivalent number of teachers is 453,813, compared to just over 500,000 in the age breakdowns.

There is no age-based breakdown of support staff.

Some special school staff have already been offered the vaccine as councils included them in their priority roll-out or offered them leftover supplies.

School leaders said they were disappointed by the decision not to prioritise education staff.

Geoff Barton, the leader of the heads' union ASCL, said he welcomed the "reassurance" given to those vaccinated because of their age, but said this "should have been extended to the rest of the education workforce by prioritising them in the second phase of the programme".

But Professor Jonathan Van-Tam, England's deputy chief medical officer, said it would be "very difficult" to start in a "logical place" because of the "multiplicity of occupations that would need to be called forwards".

National Reference Test moved from spring to summer term

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

This year's national reference test will take place between April 19 and May 21, after it was pushed back from the spring term.

Ofqual introduced the assessment in 2017 to provide more information about the awarding of GCSEs.

Previous guidance had stated that the test would be conducted between February 22 and March 19 this year, but the exams regulator confirmed this week that it has been moved.

However, the results of the NRT will not be used in GCSE awarding this year, following the decision to cancel summer exams and replace them with a system of teacher assessment.

But the results "will provide important evidence about the impact of lost learning during the coronavirus pandemic and help to understand the context of the 2021 cohort when they take other qualifications in the future," Ofqual said.

As in previous years, the English and maths test for year 11 pupils will be administered by the National Foundation for Educational Research. Schools that have been selected to take part will have been contacted by the research organisation.

In its guidance, Ofqual said it was "aware that as a result of school closures and periods of self-isolation due to the pandemic, students in this year's cohort may not have covered the English language or mathematics curriculum as fully as they would have in other years".

"However, we expect all students in the selected group of students to take the test in order to avoid bias in the sample and to ensure that the results of the test provide evidence about the impact of this lost learning."

Ofqual also said it was "important that all students taking part are reassured that information about how they perform on the test will not be shared with their school and will have no impact on the GCSE grade they are awarded this summer".

Schools have a legal obligation to take part in the test if selected, but heads can withdraw pupils in "exceptional circumstances".

Just 0.14% of secondary Covid tests positive, but fears over accuracy

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

Around 3,000 positive Covid test results have been recorded by secondary schools since the beginning of the year, with pupils slightly more likely to test positive than staff.

NHS Test and Trace statistics show that just 0.14 per cent of all lateral flow tests (LFTs) results reported by secondary schools so far this term have been positive.

Secondary schools have been testing their staff and those vulnerable pupils and children of key workers who are still attending school during partial closures. Staff make up the majority of those tested.

In total, 2,097,267 LFT results were reported by secondary schools and colleges between January 1 and February 24. Of those, just 3,017 were positive, while 3,727 were recorded as 'unknown/void'.

When broken down further the data shows secondary pupils are slightly more likely to receive a positive test result than staff, with a positivity rate of 0.19 per cent compared to 0.13 per cent among staff.

In comparison, test and trace data for the nearly 14.5 million LFT tests logged on the National Testing Programme database since October shows an overall positivity rate of 0.6 per cent.

Biostatistician professor Jon Deeks, of the Institute of Applied Health Research at the



University of Birmingham, told Schools Week he was "surprised by how low the number of detected cases was" and feared continued testing in school was a "waste of money and effort".

"The issue when you're not detecting many cases is you have to think very carefully 'are you detecting more than we would get false-positives?'"

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) says the Innova Lateral Flow SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Tests used in schools have a false-positive rate of 0.32 per cent.

From next week, secondary schools will be expected to test returning pupils three times on site within a fortnight, before switching to twice-weekly home-testing.

Staff will also be given test kits to test themselves twice weekly at home.

Pupils will be allowed to attend lessons as normal after their first negative result, but will need to isolate for at least ten days if they test positive.

Positive test results from LFTs taken at home must be confirmed by a PCR test.

Deeks said he feared false positives could mean pupils and staff having to self-isolate unnecessarily, leading to even more missed learning.

However, there have also been concerns raised about the potential for false negatives.

The government says LFTs only detect around 60 per cent of cases when performed by non-experts – although the chances of catching a case may improve with repeated tests.

But Dr Alexander Edwards, associate professor in biomedical technology at the University of Reading, told Channel 4 FactCheck "the messages from public health officials continue to be clear (I hope) that even if you test negative with a Covid-19 test, it still doesn't 'prove' that you are safe and not infected."

The NHS data also shows that primary schools, school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools recorded a slightly higher rate of positivity among their staff than secondary schools.

Primary staff have been conducting tests twice a week at home this term, but there has been no testing of primary pupils.

Between January 14 and February 24, 2,627,199 LFT results were recorded by primary and nursery settings. Of those, 4,953 were positive and 5,595 were void or unknown.

This means 0.19 per cent of tests taken across these settings resulted in positive results.

The DHSC was contacted for comment.

FREDDIE WHITTAKER | @FCDWHITTAKER

Small and remote schools will get more cash under formula change

Hundreds more small remote schools could be eligible for extra cash under government proposals to change the national funding formula (NFF).

But the money to fund the rise will be diverted from elsewhere in the overall schools budget.

A consultation on changes to the "sparsity factor" in the national funding formula from 2022-23 was published by the Department for Education this week.

The government is proposing a £10,000 increase in the maximum sparsity funding available, as well as changes to how it decides schools' eligibility.

Sparsity funding is allocated for schools below a certain size and whose pupils live

more than three miles from their second nearest secondary school, or two miles from their second nearest primary. Currently, these distances are calculated "as the crow flies".

The DfE is proposing that, from 2022-23, the distances be calculated based on road journeys, after finding that 1,123 schools are "no more than two-tenths of a mile below their respective sparsity distance thresholds in the 2021-22 NFF".

The consultation document states that, had the road distance change been applied this year, it would have seen "approximately 900 more schools become eligible for sparsity funding".

There are no plans to change the distance thresholds themselves, or the threshold for

the definition of a small school.

The government has allocated funding to councils based on the national funding formula for several years now, but town halls still have some freedoms in how they allocate the money. That will continue to be the case in the next academic year, though officials have said they remain committed to a "hard" implementation of the formula.

The DfE estimates that the changes to the measurement of distances and increases in maximum sparsity funding values would increase the total amount allocated through the sparsity factor from £43 million to £85 million.

The extra funding will be drawn from the existing funding allocation for schools.

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News

EXCLUSIVE



No 'current' plans to force schools into MATs

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

There are "currently no plans" to legislate to force schools to join multi-academy trusts, the education secretary has said, after he revealed the government wanted "far more schools" in the clusters by 2025.

Gavin Williamson told the Foundation for Education Development's inaugural summit that partnerships between schools were "fundamental", especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, adding the government was "actively looking" at how to get more schools into MATs.

But speaking to *Schools Week*, the education secretary said he was proposing to promote to leaders the "real benefits of being part of a family of schools", rather than changing the law to force them in.

Williamson told the summit on Monday that multi-academy trusts were "powerful vehicles for improving schools by sharing expertise, working collaboratively and driving improvements".

"By 2025, we want to see far more schools residing in strong families than we do today, and we're actively looking at how we can make that happen."

Williamson spoke to *Schools Week* later in the week following a visit to City Heights Academy in south London, which is part of the 28-school E-ACT academy trust.

"Talking to the teachers, pupils, headteacher, everyone there, you really saw the benefit they'd had of being in a family of schools," he said.

"There's certainly currently no plans to legislate, but I think the pandemic has shown the strength of creating these families of schools, these strong clusters, the benefit of schools working together, really driving performance."

Although it abandoned plans to force all schools to become academies in favour of a more woolly ambition in 2016, the government has made it clear that MATs are its preferred vehicle for school improvement.

It comes amid concerns about a fragmented school system, with the majority of secondary schools now academies but most primary schools still being local authority-maintained.

Ministers have sought to increase participation by providing growth funding for MATs, and through moves to rebroker struggling academies into larger groups.

However, the jury is still out on whether MATs are the right vehicle for school-to-school collaboration.

A 2019 report from the EDSK think tank called for a single unified school system, with the terms "academies" and "free schools" abandoned and MATs renamed as "national school trusts".

Tom Richmond, the report's author and a former DfE adviser, said it was "widely accepted" that having all schools operate within a strong and successful partnership is the "right way forward", but said it was "wrong to assume that a MAT is the only possible way of achieving this goal".

"Given the enormous strain that schools are under right now due to the pandemic, it would be disappointing to see the government expend precious resources trying to convert more maintained schools into academies when there is still no convincing evidence that academies outperform other institutions."

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, told the summit the "structural conversation" proposed by the education secretary was "a diversion away from creating the trust that we need to be innovative in taking things forward".

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Combine roles of RSCs and councils, says report

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

The responsibilities of local authorities and regional schools commissioners (RSCs) should be unified under a single governance structure for England's schools, a new research report has concluded.

The Association of Education Committees Trust and British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society have released joint research proposing a new "locality model".

It calls for a "fundamental review" of the current school system to reduce fragmentation and duplication, and warns the Covid-19 pandemic has "highlighted the challenges of responding rapidly to local needs in a system which lacks a robust infrastructure".

The majority of secondary schools and some primaries are now academies which answer to RSCs and ultimately to central government, while most primaries and the remaining secondary schools are still under local authority oversight.

The report recommends that governance of the school system should be brought together into a "single locality governance structure" which combines the current responsibilities of RSCs and LAs, the report suggests.

To do this the DfE should establish school partnership boards which are jointly accountable councils and commissioners.

These boards would also ensure schools complete "robust, externally moderated self-assessments" in place of normal Ofsted inspections, with the watchdog's role revised to provide "national validation of the processes of self-assessments and peer moderation in each locality".

The report also says local areas should take "collective responsibility" for the progress of all disadvantaged pupils and produce an annual action plan outlining the measures they need to take. There should then be a metric against which councils can report the progress of vulnerable pupils.

Sir Tim Brighouse, a renowned former education official in Oxfordshire and Birmingham, and one of the architects of New Labour's London Challenge policy, said he supported the idea of control being taken "by people close to the action rather than depending on remote management from Whitehall for those things that can be done locally or regionally".

2020 results fiasco damaged trust in statistical models

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

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Public bodies may be “less willing” to use statistical models to support decisions in future after the system to award exam grades last year failed to “command public confidence”, the statistics watchdog has warned.

A review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority, found the grading system prompted “widespread public dissatisfaction” and that “limitations” of the statistical models used were not fully communicated.

Although it found qualification regulators and exam boards “worked with integrity” to develop the system, the watchdog warned that “guidance and support” from government should be improved.

Exams were replaced by a system of centre-assessment grades standardised by computer algorithm last year, but the approach was abandoned after a fierce backlash over the downgrading of results, with pupils instead issued with the grades provided by their schools.

This week, in a report on lessons learned from the fiasco, the OSR said it feared public bodies will now be “less willing to use statistical models to support decisions in the future for fear of a public acceptability backlash, potentially hindering innovation and development of statistics and reducing the public good they can deliver”.

The watchdog said this was illustrated by the emphasis placed on an algorithm-free



approach in 2021, with education secretary Gavin Williamson promising in January to “put our trust in teachers rather than algorithms”.

In the wake of last year’s fiasco, ministers were widely reported to have attempted to lay the blame with exams regulator Ofqual. Chief regulator Sally Collier resigned shortly afterwards.

The prime minister Boris Johnson also sought to blame the “mutant algorithm” for the problems.

But the OSR found that teams in regulators and exam boards in all four UK nations “worked with integrity to try to develop the best method in the time available to them”.

However, none of the models was “able to command public confidence and there was widespread public dissatisfaction of how the grades had been calculated and the impact on students’ lives”.

The OSR’s main conclusion is that achieving public confidence in statistical models is “not just about the technical design of the model – taking

the right decisions and actions with regards to transparency, communication and understanding public acceptability throughout the end-to-end process is just as important”.

It also concluded that guidance and support for public bodies developing models “should be improved”.

Government has a “central role to play in ensuring that models developed by public bodies command public confidence”, the OSR said.

This “includes directing the development of guidance and support, ensuring that the rights of individuals are fully recognised and that accountabilities are clear”.

The OSR said regulators and exam boards faced “numerous challenges” in developing the system last year, which meant it was “always going to be difficult for a statistical algorithm to command public confidence”.

However, the “limitations of statistical models, and uncertainty in the results of them, were not fully communicated”.

Ofqual said it welcomed the OSR’s work to “build public confidence in statistical approaches” and said the report “recognises the challenging task Ofqual – and our counterparts in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland – faced in awarding grades in the absence of exams last summer”.

“We have learned lessons from last summer. We continue to work with other government departments to make data available for wider scrutiny and we recently set out, jointly with the DfE, our approach to awarding grades in 2021, after our largest-ever public consultation.”

The DfE was approached for comment.

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

Don’t give test kits to pupils’ households, DfE tells schools

Schools should not distribute Covid-testing kits to members of their pupils’ households, the Department for Education has said, following the announcement that families will now also qualify for free twice-weekly tests.

On Sunday, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) announced that households with children of school-age will get free equipment to test themselves at home “to help find more Covid-19 cases and break chains of transmission” as pupils return to school from March 8.

The free rapid-result lateral flow test kits will

also be offered to those in pupils’ childcare and support bubbles. The tests were supposed to be available for families to collect from March 1.

However, in an email update sent to schools leaders, the DfE warned that schools “should not give test kits to parents, carers or household members and should not order more test kits for this purpose”. Deliveries of more equipment to aid schools with their back-to-school testing efforts started last week.

Instead, families should access tests via their own employers if they offer staff testing, by

attending a local test site, by collecting testing kits from a local site or by ordering them online, the DfE said.

Letters with “advice on where to access testing” will be “made available for schools to share with parents and staff shortly”, the DfE added.

Twice-weekly home testing kits, which are already being offered to in-school staff, will also be offered to adults working in the wider school community, including bus drivers and after-school club leaders, the DfE has confirmed.

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EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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Not a crumb for schools in Sunak's disappointing budget

School staff across the country have been at the forefront of this nation's response to the Covid pandemic, keeping our children learning in school and at home in exceptional circumstances.

So it was disappointing that schools did not get any extra money in this week's budget - and that the chancellor did not mention them in his speech.

The education sector wasn't completely underserved, with some promising announcements on apprenticeships.

But headteachers will rightly ask why a budget that focused on recovery from the pandemic did not provide more money to help cash-strapped institutions across the country deal with the massive task ahead of them.

It is all very well for the government to point to previous pledges to increase overall school funding, which were long overdue even when they were made in 2019.

But if we are to ensure that long overdue funding increases aren't eaten up by existing costs and extra outlays as a result of Covid, additional funding is sorely needed.

While we do not doubt that measures are needed to reinvigorate the economy as we come out of this pandemic - and we are heartened by the government's pledge not to let public finances suffer as a result - short-term investment in our schools is vital.

Exceptional costs funding only covered a brief period in the past academic year and was only available to schools in dire financial straits, not those just getting by. But schools have still had to bear the costs of cleaning, remote education and implementing social distancing measures this year too.

It's time for a second exceptional costs fund, and not another endeavour that harms those schools that have worked hard in recent years to bring their institutions back to a surplus position.

SCHOOLS WEEK



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Government's £4 million catch-up resources could be 'downloadable, printable' materials

Laura Watts

Children are screened out and there is a limit to what they process with any distanced learning. It is essential that individual schools have their own budgets to respond appropriately to the needs of their pupils. Where is this budget for special schools whose already challenged pupils have experienced increased and the worst of the social isolation that we know has so damaged children's development and resilience

Williamson: Government 'looking at' how to get more schools into multi-academy trusts

Mark Watson

In its own words the Foundation for Education Development is all about "a long-term vision and plan for education in England". So while I'm sure Gavin Williamson has things to say about the immediate future and the unprecedented challenges facing schools and children, the theme of today's programme at the summit was "How can we move beyond our immediate challenges to create a long-term successful future for our children and life-long learners".

I'm sure you see this as an opportunity to bash Gavin Williamson, and heaven knows *Schools Week* positioned it as such, but talking about the immediate challenges of emerging from lockdown and what to do about 2021 exams would have been completely inappropriate.

Phil Allman

If only individual schools had the ability to be part of an organisation with a larger capacity, perhaps with an overarching administrative function to ensure support, challenge and opportunity to drive down costs. Might be even better if it was a local one, where contextual factor could be best understood. Now, wouldn't that be amazing

REPLY OF THE WEEK MJ

Government's £4 million catch-up resources could be 'downloadable, printable' materials

More than ever this shows that the government and DfE don't understand how schools work. My school, as I imagine many more are, is already creating our own materials and systems to assess our children and inform our planning. We will be doing these in March – in addition to our regular robust assessment schedule. Please don't waste money on this. We can spend the money more wisely for our own setting.



Peter Endersby

As usual the tone deaf Williamson has his hand on the pulse of the pertinent issues facing schools. Coming up with a solution to a problem that doesn't exist, voicing it on the eve of a crucial few months for schools emerging from another lockdown, while still waiting for guidance about imminent exams.

Q&A: 'We need a long-term plan for education in England'

Maureen Bray

For many years it's been clear to many people who are passionate about education that the current system no longer meets the needs of young learners or society in general. It's outdated, and moving the puzzle pieces around no longer forms a coherent picture. A new approach is required to excite and restore children's natural desire to learn.

Nearly every child I've come across in my nearly 77 years at best seems to tolerate school and, at worst, actively hates it. Some educational establishments have succeeded over the years. I'm at a loss as to why such best practice has not been emulated. I do hope and pray that finally the time has come...

Profile

JL DUTAUT | @DUTAUT



‘Connection from the grassroots speaks to my heart’

JL Dutaut meets the new CEO of Impetus who is determined to model a new way to decide education policy

When you’re working with young people who have different vulnerable circumstances, it’s not OK to be average.”

In normal times and from someone else (Imagine Sir Michael Wilshaw, the former chief inspector, saying this), it is the kind of language teachers might complain feeds into a workload, recruitment and retention crisis.

But it’s a different proposition altogether if it’s the new chief executive of Impetus. For a start, Eleanor Harrison is fully appreciative that what schools have achieved in this pandemic is anything but average. And what it drives in her is a desire not to castigate, but to support.

In fact, if those words create any pressure at all for Harrison, it appears to be mainly on herself. She joined Impetus, the private equity foundation that supports charities to deliver better opportunities for vulnerable young people, last September. Her first six months have been marked by two national lockdowns, a second bout of school closures and a national reckoning with the deep, ingrained inequalities revealed by Covid. And she took on the role when her first child, Maximus, was little more than a year old.

As if all that wasn’t enough, she took over after Impetus had been named as one of five organisations responsible for the design and delivery of the £350 million National

Tutoring Programme (NTP), a central plank of the government’s plans to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on the school-age population - and one that has already come under criticism.

Impetus is also funded by wealthy private donors at a time when “churnocracy” is making national headlines and questions asked about the distorting role of, and the growing need for, philanthropy in state education.

As to the NTP, Harrison takes the criticism on the chin. She says 100,000 pupils have already been reached and the programme is on track to hit 250,000. She’s reassuring that it’s reaching those that it should, and that

Profile: Eleanor Harrison



Harrison with friends celebrating the christening of son Max, Jan 2020



Settling into her new home in Kenya to run Action for Children in Conflict, July 2017

systems are in place to ensure it's distributed fairly across all regions, phases and stages.

As for criticism of the speed of start-up, she says she doesn't think it was done too badly. "From the announcement, to ironing out the details, to getting through all the due diligence, the funding, the set-up, how they're going to make it work so that grants could be issued at the beginning of November, to over 100,000 new people being reached...

"And ... trying to reach the young people who are most affected by lost learning, while also giving headteachers the flexibility to choose the students most in need. Monitoring pupil premium take-up in that cohort, but recognising that teachers are best placed to choose...

"In a very short space of time, considering all the actors, I don't think it was bad!"

As to the selection of providers, she is open that three of the charities in Impetus's portfolio were preparing bids. "In fact more than that over the lifetime of the organisation because we're passionate about tuition." Impetus recused itself from the whole process, she says.

Harrison is energetically on top of her brief, and it's evident she is no stranger to tackling big challenges. From project manager for the Refugee Council in the West Midlands



Harrison and family in-between lockdowns, July 2020

"There's a disconnect between the frontline and policy decisions"

in 2007, in the intervening 14 years she has steadily climbed to increasingly influential positions in the third sector.

It's no surprise. The first project she led for the Refugee Council, Theatre in Education, was recognised by the EU as a best practice template for volunteering, immigration and integration. In the three years between 2008 and 2011, she transformed the fortunes of Action for Children in Conflict, increasing its turnover by a factor of six. She led Global Giving UK in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and led Safe Passage during the European migrant crisis.

It was in Kenya with Action for Children in Conflict that Harrison developed the central tenet of her political philosophy. Try as she might to improve the impact of her work for children left out of education, she realised that true improvement would only come if all the actors worked together.

Competing for attention from financial



Harrison, aged 5

backers was one thing, but there needed to be mechanisms for mutual support on the ground. "So I set up a local NGO network and a strategy steering group across business, government, and organisations. We had social worker roundtables, with social workers from across the district sharing best practice to really drive up standards."

She now leads an influential organisation at a time when how to drive real and sustained school improvement is openly questioned. The National Association of Head Teachers recently published the findings of its commission on the subject. The pandemic has sidelined Ofsted, with its latest guidance saying the timing and format of a return to inspection is still the subject of discussion. Meanwhile, there's growing appreciation of the value and impact of school-to-school collaboration in the inspectorate's absence.

Harrison's underpinning philosophy is a common thread among all these. For her the

Profile: Eleanor Harrison



A trip to the local swimming pool.
Thika, Kenya. 2010



Harrison with Lord Dubs at a House of Lords evidence session on the future of UK-EU asylum cooperation. Jun 2019



Harrison with colleague, Peter Muriruri discussing adult literacy classes. Kenya, 2011

answer lies in empowering the grassroots to improve themselves and each other – engaging them with, and importantly in, a growing evidence base about impact. “It’s what excites me about Impetus. It truly is evidence-based, but it is practitioners who are feeding into that. And that speaks to my heart about connection from the grassroots.”

She started on the ground floor in the third sector, and that work still informs her approach in what is her third chief executive post. “I think that policy is incredibly important, but I don’t think we always get policy right in this country. There’s a disconnect between people doing frontline delivery work and what gets decided at a policy level.”

In the management of Covid, she finds the “disconnect” is writ large. “If you were making that policy sitting in a school, surrounded by the anarchy of half of year groups self-isolating, some children in classrooms, some working remotely, five teachers off, the headteacher teaching physics... If you were in that environment, it might change the way that you did policy.”



Harrison with her father, collecting her OBE for Services to International Development. 2017

“Philanthropy has been very beneficial on the whole”

Harrison was steeped in social work and education early on. Both her parents started off as youth workers; her mother eventually became a headteacher, her father an FE lecturer, then vicar. They taught adult literacy in the evenings and Harrison would sit at the back of the class. Both were involved in volunteering and community projects.

The result is a deep commitment to the third sector while being very clued up about schools and education policy. Rebellious, however, is not quite the right word to describe Harrison. Self-assured is perhaps closer. In spite of her comprehensive upbringing, she followed her friends in sitting the 11-plus. The only one to pass, she chose to go to a grammar school anyway. But she left it to study A-levels at the local FE college.

From there, having aspired to become a human rights lawyer, she instead went to Cambridge to study social and political sciences. “I realised it’s too late if you’re helping to represent somebody. I was keen on helping people before they got to that point.” She didn’t catch the teaching bug from her parents, but their values were deeply embedded.

So this serial volunteer turned serial charity CEO is now in a real position to influence “system change”, something she confesses to have been passionate about from early on.

Can she do that from her position at the head of a philanthropic organisation? While she recognises risks, she’s adamant charities are vital to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable.

“When you look at the impact of philanthropy, it has been very beneficial on the whole, but it’s still not as evidence-based as it should be. And where philanthropy takes over from the state, it’s then easy to cut that provision later. We have to be very careful. To me, it’s about the collaboration between philanthropists and the state. It shouldn’t be about subsidising the core.”

And can the results be equitable? Well, if her work on the NTP is anything to go by, the signs are encouraging. Accommodating the grassroots empowerment of the school system on such a massive project may slow things down, but it’s crucial to its success, not just in delivering catch-up but in modelling a better paradigm for policy.

And that’s about as far from average for education as anyone can imagine.

Opinion

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JOHN
WOODCOCK

Lord Walney, non-aligned peer in the House of Lords

Catch-up: follow Barrow's lead on summer provision

It's possible to deliver summer catch-up without burning out the teaching workforce. We've been doing it for years, writes John Woodcock

Exhausted teachers could be forgiven for not whooping with joy at the prospect of giving up their summer for the catch-up tuition programme announced by education secretary Gavin Williamson last week.

Between adapting to the news there will be no exams this year and preparing for the full return of on-site schooling next week, they've already got a vastly more challenging workload than usual.

There is a real risk of staff burn-out. No matter how dedicated teachers are to addressing the disadvantage inflicted on pupils in these dreadful circumstances, they also need some time off after 12 months in which schools have repeatedly recast their delivery models to enable their students to keep learning in the pandemic.

Helping this generation of students catch up should clearly be a national priority, and the promise of an extra £400 million is essential. Yet sharing the load by finding new ways to help teachers deliver summer provision is surely vital. The risk of the alternative is that too

many schools will not feel able to fill the six-week summer vacation in the way the Covid cohort needs. And given catch-up is going to take far longer than just one summer, it makes little sense to run teachers ragged so they aren't ready for the next academic year.

“It makes little sense to run teachers ragged

This week I have written to Mr Williamson to urge him to consider encouraging the kind of whole-community approach to summer school provision that we developed so successfully in Barrow-in-Furness when I was the town's MP. We founded the Furness Future Leaders' Academy, which ran from a pilot summer school in 2014 until it was paused during the pandemic last year, to address particular entrenched problems of poor education attainment and low ambition that have long held back young people in this area of Cumbria.

Each year, we asked teachers from every primary school in the area to identify students from a range of ability levels who they thought would benefit from a confidence boost of extra tuition and a focus on

improving soft skills learning in an alternative setting. We approached local businesses who were readily convinced of the need to invest in their future workforce. The likes of BAE, who employ around 10,000 local people making submarines in Barrow shipyard, wind farm

developers Ørsted, local paper the Mail, Cumbria County Council and many others gave the academy both monetary support and lent us inspiring staff members over a three-week period.

We took over Furness College for three weeks and retired teachers volunteered their time alongside apprentices from sponsoring organisations. I took a hands-on approach in the classroom in the first year too, having completed a level 2 teaching assistant qualification for the purpose.

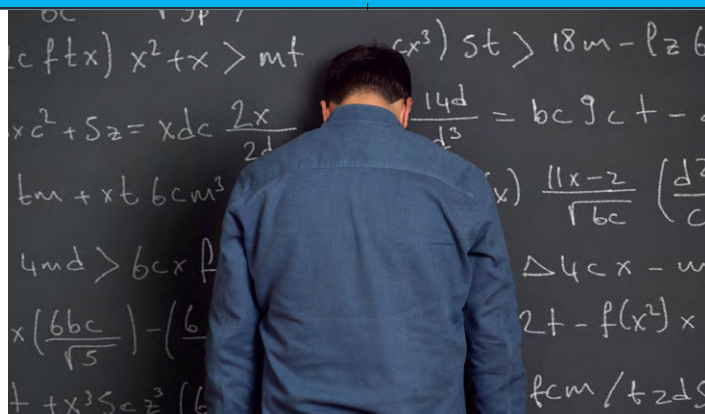
With a different local school taking on the responsibility of shaping the curriculum and providing lead teachers each year, the result was a varied and fun full-time placement for up to 100 year 5s. Teachers told us it brought lasting benefit as their students entered

secondary education with increased confidence and motivation.

As I left the House of Commons in 2019, responsibility for the Furness Leaders' Academy was formally taken on by the Furness Education and Skills Partnership, an organisation bringing together schools with local employers and agencies. In the weeks ahead, I will be helping FESP go back to those organisations and volunteers to ask them to step up again with funding and loans of staff to meet the education emergency Covid has created.

The delivery model will need to be different, given the huge increase in need created by the pandemic. But I am optimistic the Barrow community will rise to the challenge again, as could many others across the country.

This is surely a moment to boost the nation's teaching assets with the best of local business and volunteering. The only way we are to have a chance of bringing children back up to speed and supporting them in their recovery from this dreadful 12 months is to involve the whole community. Barrow has done this successfully for a number of years now. My hope is that we can help others across the country do the same for their kids too.



Opinion

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ALKA
SEGHAL-CUTHBERT

English teacher, Civitas and
co-ordinator, Don't Divide Us

Anti-racist dogma shouldn't replace real curriculum thinking

A perfect storm of competing pressures threatens to shortcut critical thinking about curriculum, writes Alka Sehgal Cuthbert

For some, Ofsted's emphasis on a knowledge-rich curriculum for all students has represented a welcome change from filling in content to fit schemas of generic skills. For many, and especially for leaders tasked with previously unimaginable levels of monitoring, predicting and recording, it has been understandably bewildering.

Amid this upheaval in school expectations and practices, schools have now been tasked with a new social justice mission, and the effect is especially pronounced in subjects like English literature, whose purpose and content are too broad and, as a result, hotly debated.

English teachers are increasingly expected to use their reading lists to promote active anti-racism. That pressure finds its source in a political outlook that shifts the terms of the debate from its usual dichotomy – wavering between the poles of understanding/expression and rule-bound linguistics/literary techniques – to put its entire focus on representation.

But, while the rhetoric is

persuasive, the concept of representation has a long and contested history. At its worst, the idea is used to portray readers as blank slates rather than imaginatively active participants. It is used to justify control over what they are given access to, and how.

The added pressures of the pandemic have allowed this

narrative to take hold over the past year. Now, some schools are promoting virtual libraries with organised sections on Black History Month & Black Lives Matter where all manner of texts are offered as suitable reading on the basis of their literal representational content rather than their power to evoke imagined experience.

In the words of Italo Calvino, a good book "has never exhausted all it has to say to its readers". All pupils deserve the imagined experiences aesthetically rich books offer. The wish to ensure the curriculum is representative in a literal sense means its imaginative, aesthetic dimension is slipping from schools' view. The belief that non-white



pupils need to see themselves (or a version of themselves) and their experiences reflected in all curricula is deeply worrying. It assumes that differences in social experience are synonymous with different capacities for imagined, aesthetic experience.

It is good that there are curriculum initiatives that seek to expand and enrich materials. Penguin, for example, is teaming up with an

"We are not called to teach texts we love, but to teach skills so our students can be critical thinkers." She adds that to teach this text in terms of narrative elements alone is irresponsible because "without interrogating it, its flaws, or digging deeper, teachers uphold the racism it presents".

The type of critical thinking she wants is one that leads pupils to the conclusion that Atticus fails to make "structural changes" and that "he lets Tom die". These assertions may be true, but they are utterly banal literary points. This is dogma, not critical thinking. It is anti-literature and anti-educational because it imposes a single interpretation on the book's imaginative potential and complexities of meanings.

There are some simple questions we can all ask to guard against this enforced literary myopia. Does a text invite multiple interpretations? Do its phrases and themes ring in the mind long after reading? Have I chosen it for literary and educational reasons, or to meet mine or others' non-educational aims?

Ofsted is right. Curriculum is everything. But if teachers don't have the time to ask these questions, then it becomes another locus for perverse incentives. The key to ensuring that doesn't happen is lifting bureaucratic restrictions, as well as those of Covid.

“ Reframing which texts are taught and how requires careful consideration

American education-activist group DisruptTexts in America and with the Runnymede Trust in Britain, to produce anti-racist reading lists for schools. New or re-found texts can be exciting. But reframing which texts are taught and how requires careful consideration.

To Kill A Mockingbird is exactly what Calvino might call a classic book. Multi-layered meanings, figurative language and complex characterisations create a world through which, in some way, we can come to define ourselves. Pupils need teachers who love the book despite its difficult themes and offensive vocabulary.

Lorena German, from DisruptTexts, thinks teachers have a different duty:

Opinion

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JENNY
ARROWSMITH

Senior partner (employment),
Irwin Mitchell

Reopening: Managing teachers' reasonable objections

Here's the lowdown on what school leaders need to know with regard to employment law and the safe return to school by staff members next week, writes Jenny Arrowsmith

There are many reasons why staff may be reluctant to return to work in the midst of the pandemic, or reluctant to wear a face covering. But school leaders taking a hard line in response to these concerns comes with a degree of risk.

We envisage the majority of school staff will be happy to return to a semi-normal teaching environment on March 8, but a degree of reluctance does remain. Indeed, the education unions have raised concerns that a full return, rather than a phased approach, risks increasing transmission, undoing progress made during lockdown and prolonging the disruption of education.

For school leaders, there are two chief concerns: staff refusing to return because of concerns about catching and/or passing on the virus to members of their own families, and staff refusing to wear face coverings.

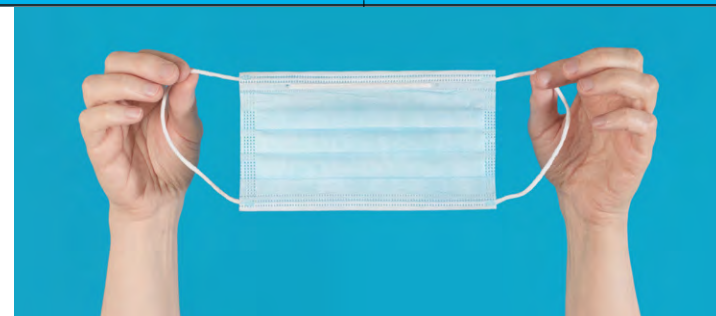
Concerns about returning

Under sections 44 and 100 of the Employment Rights Act, employees can bring claims if they are subjected to a detriment (such as being suspended or having their pay deducted) or are dismissed for exercising their right to leave their workplace. To be protected, the employee must have a 'reasonable

belief' that their workplace poses a 'serious and imminent' threat to them, or to others, including members of the public and their own families.

Anyone who is deemed vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable to the virus is likely to be able to establish a reasonable belief in this context. The 'shielding' programme is due to end at the end of March, and most vulnerable individuals should have received the first dose of the vaccine by then, but some staff members may still have genuine concerns.

The fact that an employer might disagree with a staff member as to whether there are circumstances of danger is irrelevant. An



employment tribunal would consider the employee's state of mind – it would not consider whether the employer agreed with the employee's concerns.

As such, school leaders need to tread carefully when responding to staff who are refusing to attend work because of fears of catching the virus or passing it on to others. To discipline would be a risky strategy. A pragmatic response is the better course for all:

- Update risk assessments after

Face coverings

The use of face coverings has been extended in the updated guidance to include the classroom setting in secondary schools. If an employee is refusing to wear a face covering, first a school should establish their reason for refusal. There are exemptions set out in the guidance that might apply.

If they are exempt (or claim to be) you can ask for reasonable evidence of this, such as an occupational health report or a doctor's note. An exemption card alone is not proof.

Conduct an individual risk assessment before deciding whether it's safe to allow them to continue in their normal role. Consider adjustments, such as wearing a face shield or moving to a role where they have less contact with others, or perhaps working from home.

The requirement for an employee to wear a face covering is a reasonable management instruction. As such, any refusal could justify disciplinary action, perhaps even dismissal, if deemed unreasonable. School leaders would be wise to seek advice, however, particularly if the employee claims that their decision not to wear a mask is a protected belief under the Equality Act.

By being patient and understanding and seeking advice early, school leaders can avoid potentially expensive and protracted employment claims.

“An exemption card alone is not proof

consulting with health and safety reps.

- Communicate with staff about the updated assessments and any other measures taken. Invite staff to raise any specific concerns they have.
- Carefully consider whether some members of staff should be excluded from attendance rotas temporarily.
- Deal with any concerns on an individual basis and seek to reach agreement with them. It's important to understand what concerns they have and what, if any, additional measures or adjustments could be introduced to give them the comfort to return to work.

Opinion

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RICHARD WILLIS
Honorary professor,
University of Sussex

The Chartered College of Teaching keeps 175 years of tradition alive

In the face of political and social upheavals, the teaching profession needs the Chartered College more than ever, writes Richard Willis

Writing in 2019, I was critical of the work the Chartered College of Teaching had set out to pursue. I argued that teachers were wrong to continue to strive for a nebulous professional utopia. The example of the General Teaching Council (and previous incarnations of a chartered college) led me to question the viability and effectiveness of such institutions. I was wrong.

Tracing the history of its predecessors, this year the CCT approaches its 175th anniversary. Or at least, the continued effort at a robust teaching profession that it represents does. It's an illustrious past, and so much has been achieved since its inception that harbouring qualms about its past is somewhat churlish. In fact, the positives on the balance sheet outweigh the negatives, and focusing on the weaknesses of its earlier variants only serves to hinder those who are deeply devoted to its success.

The very first incarnation was called the College of Preceptors. It was founded in Bloomsbury, London, and its inaugural meeting

marked a watershed moment in teacher professionalism. The early members had their eyes fixed on the significance of the General Medical Council regulating medical staff and the Law Society representing solicitors. Among many distinguished professionals who wanted to forge the status of the teaching profession were Sir Philip

Magnus, the Rev Dr William Haig Brown, Professor Joseph Payne, Frank Roscoe, HG Wells, Frances Buss and Dr WB Hodgson.

The College of Preceptors then became the College of Teachers, and the early struggle for professional status during the 19th century was soon embroiled in class conflict. Less protected elementary teachers wanted a unified profession. Instead, the college did its best to protect teachers from private schools, which were then the chief employers of preceptors.

But the torch of teacher professionalism has stayed alight and been passed on from generation to generation. The cause has matured politically and, under



the expert stewardship of Dame Alison Peacock, its focus is now on evidence-led practices and policies for all teachers regardless of setting.

Some argue that its membership of 40,000 is insufficient. Yet this year it is set to become financially independent of government funding. It has generated 1.2 million visits to its websites and resources,

“ The college should set its sights on ambitions worthy of its Victorian founders ”

published over 800 articles covering 200 educational topics, and in 2020 alone took over 20,000 bookings for online webinars. Its journal is widely acclaimed too.

The college's real value is not simply tied up with the size of its membership. It provides many less prominent advantages to a profession beleaguered by years of unsympathetic governments and deeply impacted by the pandemic. It works hard to raise the status and solidarity of the teaching profession, and its success in that effort is underscored by the 17,000 participants who attended its online courses on education technology.

There is of course always room for improvement. The college could

take on more examination work, for example, perhaps by offering a doctoral fellowship to high-performing teachers. The logistics of such a reform would no doubt be immense, but it would be a rightly ambitious aim to celebrate its admirable contribution over nearly two centuries. If the next 175 years are to see the profession reach true maturity, then the college should set its sights on lofty ambitions that are worthy of its Victorian founding members.

As we emerge from a global pandemic and Britain redefines its place in the world after Brexit, education will be key to the nation's success – as it has always been. Only a body like the Chartered College can safeguard its workforce from the political winds that will arise from these troubled times, and ensure their contribution is not only recognised but respected.

As for the critics, it has taken me just two years to change my mind. And in the grand scheme of a Chartered College of Teaching, that's a pretty negligible span of time. With a continued focus on the long term over expediency and on its future rather than its past, the profession will be in good hands. And that's far from a nebulous utopianism.

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Making Meaning in English: Exploring the Role of Knowledge in the English Curriculum

Author: David Didau

Publisher: Routledge

Reviewer: Gwen Nelson, English teacher, secondary school in Leicestershire

How do you corral English, a core academic subject with a vast knowledge base, into a 350-page guide, or manifesto, for its teachers? If we want to teach “the best which has been thought and said”, what does that mean in English teaching and English curriculum planning?

As challenges go, Didau’s attempt to answer these questions is a tricky one. The vastness of English as a subject makes it all the tougher. And the target audience – English teachers, who can be likened to belligerent angry badgers high on stress and caffeine – are not an easy crowd to please.

At just 350 pages, *Making Meaning in English* is remarkably concise, indicating that Didau has made many tough choices on our behalf about what to include in (and exclude from) a knowledge-rich English curriculum. The book’s organisation is a particular strength. The early chapters provide a detailed rationale for the purposes of this text, why it is necessary, and where it is going. These concentrate on shifting English curriculum thinking away from a skills-based subject (although exam board GCSE mark schemes state explicitly that English is skills-based) to one that is rich and broad in purposeful subject knowledge.

The middle chapters discuss what could be called Didau’s tenets of English as an academic subject. Among them are Metaphor – Didau’s enthusiasm for his subject matter seeps through every page here; Pattern – containing a really useful section on poetic meter;

and Grammar – an annual hot potato for well-known authors with a disdain for fronted adverbials, and the inclusion of it is absolutely necessary.

The final chapters draw all this curriculum thinking and subject knowledge together into some key stage 3 programmes of study that are cross-referenced against Didau’s central pillars. Readers are also given access to online curriculum resources via his website.

In making his case, Didau does not shy away from issues such as “decolonising the curriculum”. In his closing section, he justifies really clearly why a knowledge-rich English curriculum is more inclusive than it is exclusive.

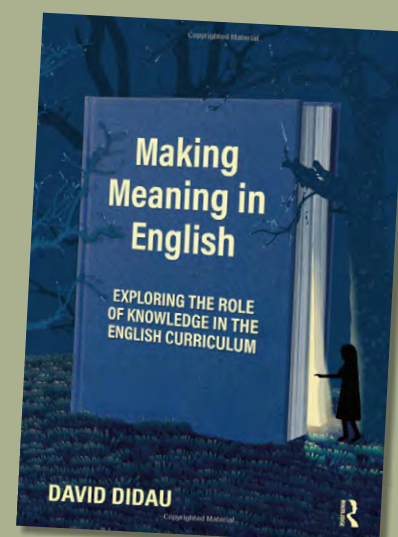
Each chapter takes between half an hour and an hour to read and will be of particular value to early-career English teachers, who will get a helping hand in what really matters in terms of their own subject knowledge. Experienced teachers will recognise the book’s core ideas with comfort while also learning some useful nuggets along the way.

I have very few niggles with *Making Meaning in English*, but the Story chapter in particular felt quite unbalanced. Many of its pages are given over to the discussion of different types of plot structures, along with a much-needed discussion of characters as narrative construct. All well and good. However, this is at the expense of one of the most useful, productive and illuminating aspects of narrative to teach: narrative point-of-view, narrative voice, and audience positioning. This is discussed right at the end of the chapter, but all too

briefly for my tastes. Experience tells me that all kinds of interesting worlds, ideas and areas of critical thinking open up to students when effort is made to focus on authorial choices for narrative point of view, and how we as readers engage with the text as a result.

So, has Didau achieved what he set out to do? Yes, I believe he has. At the end, he makes no bones about knowing that “some of you may like it, some of you will not”. As an English teacher himself, he understands that disagreement about our subject is in our DNA. But, agree or disagree, he has carefully prioritised English subject knowledge that will allow all secondary pupils to access and appreciate “the best which has been thought and said” in our subject.

This is a book which contains much common sense, which is no bad thing. Is it good? Yes. Did it knock my socks off? Not quite. Am I pleased I read it? On the whole, yes.



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is Jon Hutchinson, assistant head, Reach Academy Feltham and visiting fellow, Ambition Institute

@JON_HUTCHINSON_

A purposeful timeline display in and across Key Stage 2

@Mr_S_Tiffany

Last year I oversaw the primary history curriculum for Oak National Academy. I needed all the help that I could get. How grateful I was, then, that primary teacher Stuart Tiffany (better known as Mr T Does Primary History) kindly got in touch and gave me a chronology masterclass.

In fact, this lack of chronological understanding seems to be a bit of a weakness in primary history curricula more generally. So I was delighted to read this comprehensive exploration of how teachers can support children to make links both within, and between, 'topics' or periods of history.

The blog includes loads of extremely useful examples of timeline displays which I'm sure primary teachers will love replicating, but will do so driven by the clearly reasoned and powerful rationale provided by Tiffany.

Reflections on the Hermeneutics of Question and Answer

@riley_ned

It was reassuring to read right at the start of this blog that its author, humanities teacher Ned Riley "had absolutely no idea what hermeneutics was before this

TOP BLOGS of the week

seminar". Neither did I until I read the blog.

It turns out that it's something we all do, not just in history but in all sorts of subjects. It is the process of asking questions about our sources. Riley goes on to differentiate between conservative hermeneutics, almost certainly the default approach we all unconsciously take, and radical hermeneutics, a new method which he has been converted to.

If you're worried that this is all a little abstract, Riley brings it back to the classroom with examples of how we might use the method in lessons, before neatly concluding that radical hermeneutics might alter, for the better, how we actually think.

How can we tailor our instructional coaching approach for both novices and experts?

@Josh_CPD

If social media is anything to go by, 'instructional coaching' is all set to be the Next Big Thing in education. Expect an INSET soon. If you'd like to get ahead of the curve, though, coaching maestro Josh Goodrich is writing a three-part guide to clarify exactly what we mean when we talk about coaching.

This, the second in the series, addresses one of the common critiques of coaching: that although it can be useful to expedite the skills of novice teachers,

it's less helpful at supporting more expert teachers to develop. Goodrich argues that it is possible to implement a unified coaching model, but that expert teachers require a less directive approach.

A Sisyphean endeavour: school complexity and the problem of remote learning

@Missis_SCS

It's pretty uncontroversial to say that schools are complex places. It's what makes them so thrilling yet frustrating to work in. And remote learning seems to have stripped us of some of our key tools to bring order to their chaos: shared routines and rituals, a common language, a unified approach.

In this blog, director of education Sallie Stanton suggests how school leaders might approach such complexity, providing a mantra that I'll be painting on my office door the moment I'm back: "Don't oversimplify the problems; don't overcomplicate the response".

Drawing on work from the inspirational Dixons Academies Trust, as well as the world's leading authority on teaching expertise, David Berliner, Stanton provides a deceptively simple framework of principles leaders can use to promote engagement and rigour in online learning.

Teacher Assessed Grades

@ProfKime

Last week saw confirmation that pupils' GCSE and A-level grades will rest squarely on the shoulders of teachers. There are plenty of arguments for and against such a policy, as well as some not entirely misplaced consternation that teachers are being handed a poisoned chalice. But the decision has been made and so we'll now need to get on with the task ahead.

Helpfully, Stuart Kime of Evidence Based Education has put together an accessible explainer of some of the key concepts underpinning sound assessment: validity; fairness and bias; and standard error of measurement. If you need a quick refresher before making a start on your grading, this blog is a great place to start.

Research

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

What differentiates disadvantaged pupils who do well from those who do not?

Rebecca Wheeler, research director of International Large Scale Assessments, NFER

Recent national and international evidence has shown that the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the negative impact of disadvantage on educational success. Understanding how to mitigate this is therefore vital to ensuring an equitable recovery for disadvantaged young people.

New NFER research highlights the importance for these students of understanding how you learn and of creating environments where pupils believe their ability will develop over time, rather than something that is fixed.

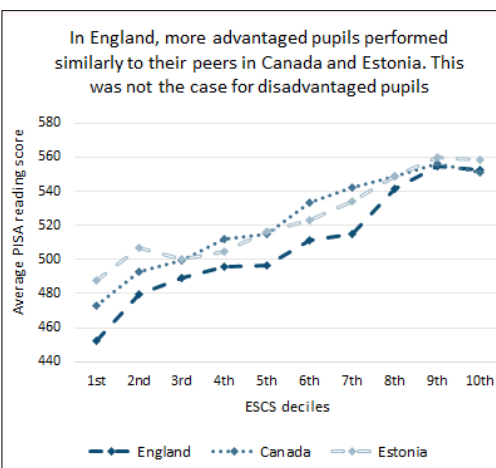
These findings come from further analysis we undertook of pupils who took part in OECD's Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018. Although the data was collected prior to the pandemic, the analysis provides insights into how we can support pupils as they return to school having missed a significant amount of learning.

There were some encouraging findings about how well schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are supporting disadvantaged pupils. These included increases in the performance of disadvantaged pupils in reading and maths compared with previous cycles, and stable performance in science against an international overall drop in performance in that subject.

However, disadvantage remains the single most influential factor impacting on educational under-achievement. While no country can claim to have solved the problem, some countries are doing

better than others. For instance, England's most advantaged pupils perform similarly to the most advantaged pupils in Canada and Estonia. Yet these two high-performing countries' PISA success can be attributed to better performance of their disadvantaged pupils compared with those in England.

In spite of their socio-economic



disadvantage, some pupils overcome barriers and attain high scores in PISA. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, around one-third of disadvantaged pupils achieved at a level considered by PISA to equip them for success in later life.

Digging deeper into the PISA data can help us to identify areas for support. NFER's analysis found that disadvantaged pupils who did well in PISA despite the odds had a better understanding of how they learn – or 'metacognitive strategies'. They were also less likely to believe that intelligence can't be changed – to have a 'growth mindset'. In addition, they had high aspirations for their future education or careers and were less likely to truant.

Supporting metacognition

These findings support previous research findings, such as from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), that teaching and using

metacognitive strategies can help to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, pupils who were disadvantaged but high-achieving were more likely to use metacognitive strategies than low-achieving disadvantaged pupils.

As the EEF advises, metacognitive strategies can be taught in conjunction with subject specific content that will help to cement them as transferable skills. Our new findings make a strong case that they should be. The Sutton-Trust/EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit rates metacognition as a high-impact, low-cost approach to improving the attainment of disadvantaged learners. The evidence suggests that use of these strategies can be worth the equivalent of an additional seven months' progress.

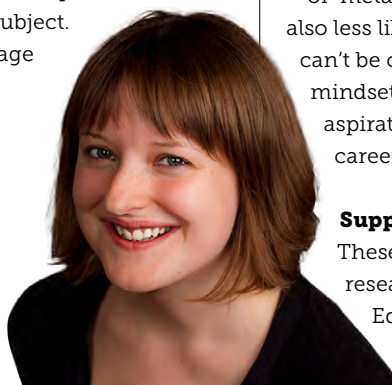
Creating rewarding environments

Resilient pupils were also more likely to have a growth mindset. That is, resilient pupils recognise challenges as external, understanding they can be confronted and tackled. They believe that their efforts at school contribute to their success in school and the future.

Early intervention

Resilient pupils had high aspirations compared with their disadvantaged, low-achieving peers. By 15 years old, pupils should already have a good idea of the general level of jobs and education that are in scope for them. Therefore, any interventions that focus on raising aspirations should start from an earlier age.

As children return to schools, these findings re-emphasise the impact of disadvantage on educational attainment and life chances. But they also indicate which tools and strategies are likely to work best in the recovery effort – intervening early, positively, with a focus on subject knowledge and metacognitive strategies.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

TUESDAY

It was revealed this week that the Department for Education is on track to meet its target of delivering most of the 1.3 million laptops and tablets promised to pupils in need by the end of this week.

Data shows the DfE has dispatched or delivered 1,217,194 devices to schools and local authorities since the scheme began, including 161,449 between February 14 and 28.

DfE officials and ministers will no doubt be patting themselves on the back over this milestone, but the news will come as little comfort to those pupils who have waited a year for access to a device, only to receive one just as they're about to go to school.

The figures will also serve as even less comfort to those who will still be without a device even after the target is met. Prior to the pandemic Ofcom estimated that nine per cent of children – between 1.1 and 1.8 million – did not have access to a laptop, desktop or tablet at home.

Catch-up tsar Sir Kevan Collins has been given a wide remit to explore how best to help children recover from the pandemic and partial school closures.

And it appears that remit includes dunking on the very government that appointed him.

Sir Kev declared during a hearing

of the education select committee this week that there wasn't "enough of an integrated strategy" for catch-up.

"The summer package that was announced last week is a good start but it's not a recovery plan, we need to go much further with some more fundamental, long-term pieces of work," he said.

In another pop at the powers that be, Collins also warned that recovery efforts have identified "underlying scars and issues" in the system.

Say what you really think why don't you...



THURSDAY

If anyone was in doubt about whether former DfE permanent secretary Jonathan Slater planned on keeping schtum about his time at the department before this week, they certainly won't be now.

In an extraordinary broadside against the governments he served, Slater told the Foundation for Education Development summit this week that efforts to narrow the attainment gap

between disadvantaged pupils and their better-off peers ceased to be a "main focus" for the Department for Education in 2015.

Slater claimed that until the Covid-19 pandemic struck, the department's "main effort" in recent years was on completing its academies reforms.

The former civil servant said that although expanding the academies programme had also been a priority between 2010 to 2015, there was also a "parallel effort to try and reduce the attainment gap". Both efforts "achieved results", he said.

"There was a huge increase in the number of academies, and there was a significant reduction in the attainment gap between 2010 and 2015."

But after 2015, the focus on the attainment gap, which Slater said was "more the contribution of the Lib Dems" in the coalition government, diminished.

"I don't think there was anything like the focus inside the department on that question post-2015. I don't think it was the main focus any more, and I think it's probably not a coincidence that the attainment gap stopped falling."

Of course – the comments don't reflect well on Slater himself, who was, we would hope, in a position to do something about the oversight. In fact, the only person they really reflect well on is David Laws, who was the Lib Dem fox in the Tory DfE henhouse during the coalition years.



Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust

Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Primary Phase Lead)

Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust
Salary : GBP £92,624 - £107,239 per year (L33 – L39)

Directors are looking for an outstanding Catholic leader to provide dynamic and strategic direction and leadership across Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, particularly in the primary phase. You will deputise for the CEO when directed and as required.

This is an exciting opportunity for an inspirational and experienced Primary Phase leader to join a growing Trust which will have 29 Primary Schools by July 2022. Working alongside the CEO, the central team and our exceptional Headteachers, the Deputy CEO will provide high quality, tailored support and challenge to ensure that the Trust achieves its vision for world class education for all.

Completed application forms should be submitted by email to recruitment@bccet.org.uk by 9am on Wednesday 10 March 2021. Emailed applications are required and CV's will not be accepted.



Director of Teaching School Hub

LEADERSHIP POINT 18-25 (£64,143-£76,141)
FULL-TIME, PERMANENT
SEPTEMBER 2021

The Redhill Trust is looking to appoint a Director to lead its recently designated Teaching School Hub, which will serve over 200 schools and operate over an area covering Gedling, Sherwood, Newark and Bassetlaw. We will be working closely with the lead school, Carlton Junior Academy, and our three strategic partners; the Flying High Partnership, Minster Trust for Education and Diverse Academies Trust.

The successful candidate will be ambitious for all students in the locality and be passionate about the importance of the highest quality training and professional development. Experience of successful strategic leadership at a senior level is essential, as is the ability to network and form highly productive, professional relationships with a wide range of stakeholders.

For application information or to arrange a conversation with Redhill's CEO, Andrew Burns, please contact S.McNeill@theredhillacademy.org.uk

Closing date: 12 noon Monday 22nd March



Bright Futures Educational Trust is a highly collaborative partnership of seven schools and a large teaching school based in the North West. As a result of our imminent growth we have two exciting opportunities.

Director of Business and Commercial Finance

Salary: £68,862 rising to £75,956

We are looking for a qualified accountant, who has experience of bringing sustainability, economy and efficiency to a growing and developing multi academy trust. You will lead on the commercial development of Bright Futures. You will also be responsible for strategic procurement and contract management, whilst driving value for money through evidence based resource investment.

Demonstrating effective people skills, you will foster an environment of support, development and challenge in the central finance team.

Closes: 8 March

Marketing and Communications Manager

Salary: The full time equivalent pay is £34,728 rising to £38,890 per annum. See the information pack for full details.

We are looking for an experienced and qualified marketing and communication professional who can design and deliver a comprehensive marketing plan to support Bright Futures'

strategic aims. You will also be responsible leading on digital content, public relations and designing compelling content in various formats.

Demonstrating effective people and communication skills, you will be instrumental in enabling the Bright Futures' brand to be well respected in the education sector and beyond

Closes: 15 March

A full information pack for both posts, including the job description and person specification are on our website: <http://www.bfet.co.uk/vacancies/>.

Flexible working will be considered.

To apply please email a completed application form (we cannot accept CVs) and the criminal disclosure declaration to vacancies@bfet.uk.

Bright Futures Educational Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. Any successful applicant will be required to undertake an enhanced DBS check.

inspiration
trust

Great Yarmouth Charter Academy

Head of Physics/Teacher of Physics

Salary: MPR/UPR + TLR2

Full time, Permanent

Starting September 2021

We are seeking to appoint an enthusiastic, inspiring and ambitious Head of Physics/Teacher of Physics. You will need to be an outstanding Teacher, with a commitment for our vision of excellence and championing aspirational educational standards for all young people. We are presently oversubscribed at Year 7 and are opening a sixth form in September 2022 where Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematics will form the basis of our options.

The successful candidate will be required to lead an ambitious team of talented teachers to refine and implement our Science curriculum. They will monitor and improve student progress to make sure that every child is achieving their literary potential. If you require any further information about role and the science department, please contact Julie Collins, PA to the Principal, at juliecollins@inspirationtrust.org

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Great Yarmouth Charter Academy

Curriculum Leader

Design Technology

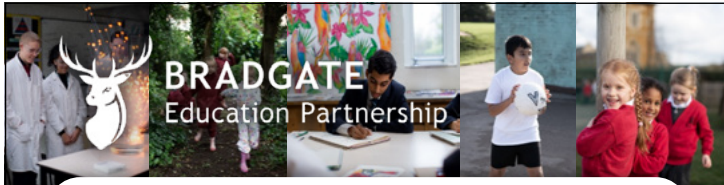
Salary: MPR/UPR + TLR2

Full time, Permanent

Starting September 2021

We are seeking to appoint an enthusiastic, inspiring and ambitious Head of Technology. You will need to be an outstanding Technology Teacher, with a commitment and passion for our vision of excellence and championing aspirational educational standards for all young people. We are presently oversubscribed at Year 7 and are opening a sixth form in September 2022 where Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematics will form the basis of our options.

The successful candidate will have an outstanding opportunity to shape and develop a Technology department at Great Yarmouth Charter Academy. To build the department, recruit their team as the department grows over the coming years. If you require any further information about this role and the technology department, please contact Julie Collins, PA to the Principal, at juliecollins@inspirationtrust.org



BRADGATE
Education Partnership

Head Teacher

Permanent

L15 – L21 (£59,581 to £69,029 per annum)

Start Date: 23rd August 2021

We are seeking an excellent Head Teacher for Church Hill Infant School who will continue the already great work that is taking place. We would like an individual who is ambitious and someone who will have high expectations for all when leading this school.

This is an exciting time to join our Trust as we move into the next stage of our development where we can offer a wealth of support with collaborative opportunities.

We would encourage candidates to arrange an informal meeting either socially distanced or MS Teams and/or a telephone conversation with the Director of Schools.

These can be arranged by contacting Dean Pomeroy, dean@bepschools.org

To apply for this position please visit:

<https://www.eteach.com/careers/bepschools/>



Leeds City Academy
Aspire Together - Achieve Together

**AN EXCITING TIME TO BE JOINING
A VALUES DRIVEN ACADEMY**
Senior Vice Principal



Leeds City Academy is one of the most rapidly improving schools within the area of Leeds, West Yorkshire. The shared mission of all our stakeholders is to work 'In Partnership' to secure the aspirations and ambitions of all members of our school community.

For more information please visit
www.whiteroseacademies.org/careers

WHITE
ROSE
ACADEMIES



TRUST EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Competitive salary

This is a newly created post to support the Chief Executive in ensuring the children and young people within our schools are given the best start in life, are able to achieve their academic potential, and grow in confidence as they learn about themselves and the world in which they live.

It is an influential, diverse role, and so the ability to think strategically, drive improvement, and have the ability to engage others is essential.

The successful candidate will play a central role in providing strategic leadership for the Trust ensuring its approach to school improvement delivers successful outcomes. Accountable for the quality of education in schools across the Trust and leading the Trust's school improvement programme, they will support and challenge schools to achieve their aspirational targets for pupils and the communities they serve.

Aquinas is a successful, highly collaborative Trust that offers a variety of career and development opportunities to talented individuals who want to make a difference.

This is a full time role that comes with an attractive salary package which reflects the scale and demands of the role. The Trust offers Teachers' Pay and Conditions and membership of the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

Further information is provided in the application pack. Please visit: <https://www.aquinastrust.org/vacancies>

The CEO would also be happy to speak with potential candidates. Please contact Janet Vick, HR Director at janet.vick@aquinastrust.org or telephone 020 3949 7016, to request a call back.

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FE WEEK



THE FLAGSHIP NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE FOR EMPLOYERS & PROVIDERS

26-30 April | Online

HEADLINE PARTNER



A City & Guilds Group Collaboration



ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

AAC IS ONLINE FOR 2021

The 7th Annual Apprenticeship Conference is the not to be missed policy and practise conference dedicated to apprenticeships. Due to the coronavirus pandemic this year's event will take place virtually.

The agenda has been spread across a week, to ensure it is accessible to all colleagues. We have a series of ticket options from solo to large groups, with tickets from as little as £37.50 per person.



CONFERENCE

The flagship conference for apprenticeship providers and employers established in 2015.



KEYNOTES

Hear from key civil servants and policy experts about the future of apprenticeships.



WORKSHOPS

Acquire new knowledge & best practice from leading employers & providers.



EXHIBITION

Meet with new & catch up with current suppliers within our virtual exhibition.



ON DEMAND

All of our keynotes and workshops will be available to view on demand post-event.



ONLINE PLATFORM

We'll be using a state of the art platform, to ensure an engaging & rewarding experience for all.



TICKETS

AAC is a great learning event for teams. We've a range of ticket options for groups.



NETWORKING

Easily connect with other attendees with one-on-one conversations via live video.

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