



The RSC who was 'too forthright' for DfE



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How to support a growing number of young carers



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## MORE CHAOS FOR OFQUAL EXAM PLANS



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## Ministers to announce new £22m 'accelerator' catch-up scheme

- Funding will subsidise evidence-based literacy and numeracy interventions
- Cash is from £302m recovery pot, despite tsar call to give funding to schools
- Flagship tutoring scheme under fire for backlog and poor pupil reach

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EXCLUSIVE

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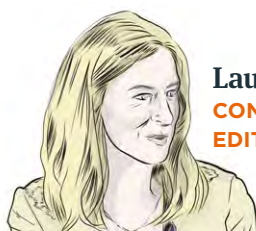
# SCHOOLS WEEK

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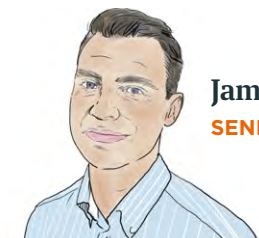
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## News

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## £22m catch-up scheme to 'accelerate' pupil progress

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

EXCLUSIVE

The government is planning to set up a National Tutoring Programme-style subsidised scheme to "accelerate" pupil's progress in numeracy and literacy, *Schools Week* can reveal.

Ministers are using £22 million of the £302 million recovery premium cash to "scale up" evidence-based interventions identified by the Education Endowment Foundation as having the strongest potential to boost attainment.

The Department for Education said the funding would subsidise education programmes that schools can purchase at a discount with their catch-up cash.

The establishment of another centralised scheme seems to jar with comments from recovery commissioner Sir Kevan Collins at the Association of School and College Leaders' annual conference yesterday.

When asked whether recovery funding should all go directly to schools, rather than in separate pots with different eligibility criteria, Collins said: "I'm much more in the camp of we should say to schools, 'Here is the bucket, work out what you need for your young people.'"

He added there was a "genuine debate" happening within government about how the cash should be used, adding the Treasury "like to see a more specific targeted piece of resourcing going in".

News of the new scheme comes after the flagship NTP was criticised for not reaching enough disadvantaged pupils.

A National Audit Office report revealed that, as of February, only one-third of children enrolled for tutoring under the programme had started courses.

Of the 125,200 pupils allocated a tutoring place, only 41,100 had started the course. Just 44 per cent were pupil premium eligible.

The NAO said it "raises questions over the extent to which the scheme will reach the most disadvantaged children".

The NTP said the percentage starting courses had risen, but they refused to provide the figures. Explaining the backlog, an NTP



spokesperson added some schools opted to schedule tutoring for later in the year following the recent lockdown.

The DfE said the accelerator programme would run alongside the NTP.

The scheme aims to make it easier for schools to access providers of "proven approaches" – outside of tutoring – in the next academic year. Further details will be published in due course.

An analysis of Ofsted monitoring inspections carried out this term found that reading was highlighted as a priority for most primaries, with schools noting pupils beginning to fall behind.

The EEF, which currently runs the tutoring arm of the NTP, said to date they have funded over 150 different evaluations of teaching and learning programmes and strategies. It is working with the DfE on how their evidence base can best support the fund.

Schools have also been told they will receive £145 per pupil premium eligible child under the recovery premium, announced last month. This increases to £290 for special schools, alternate provision, hospital schools and special units in mainstream schools.

The government has previously said the average primary school would

receive about £6,000 extra and the average secondary school around £22,000 extra in the next academic year.

Speaking yesterday, Collins said education recovery should be measured on three things: whether children are "back on track" with the core knowledge they need, the attainment gap between poorer and better-off pupils, and "broader outcomes" for children including their "emotional and physical wellbeing".

But he said it should be up to schools how they worked to meet those outcomes.

"I prefer trust, I prefer the idea we make the framework clear and use my big outcomes measures as the ones we are looking for and say to schools, 'You know your young people and your community,'" Collins added.

He warned the changes he wants would "require significant investment". But he will

be focusing on "doing a few things well", citing teaching, tutoring and more targeted work as his priority.



Sir Kevan Collins

# New Ofsted pilot to look at inspection tweaks

JAMES CARR

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EXCLUSIVE

Ofsted will conduct “full” on-site inspections at about 25 schools over the next fortnight to assess whether its framework needs to be tweaked ahead of a return to graded inspections in September.

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, revealed this week that full inspections would not return until the new academic year. The watchdog will instead shortly announce plans for a “sensible and proportionate next step” as part of its phased return during the summer term.

It will use pilots to examine how it can reintroduce the inspection framework during the pandemic, including how it inspects in line with safety measures.

Ofsted will also use the trial to look at whether it needs to tweak the framework to reflect changes over pupil attendance and the lack of exams data.

The findings will inform the full inspection return, and summer plans, with discussions with



Amanda Spielman

the government ongoing.

Spielman said this week: “We need to make sure it’s [the return of inspections] shaped in a way that makes sure we’re really listening to people and understanding the context and the challenges they have at the moment and are facing for the future.”

The pilots are optional, with some schools being approached and others volunteering to take part. They will run over the next two weeks and will not result in a published report or grade for schools.

Overall findings will also not be published as part of a wider report, but are expected to inform small updates to the Ofsted handbook and be used for internal training.

Spielman batted away criticism over the return of inspections, telling school leaders the education inspection framework (EIF) was “definitely fit for purpose”.

Speaking at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) virtual conference on Wednesday, she added the “principles on which the EIF was built still very much stand”, as it focuses more on curriculum and has “less emphasis on measured results”.

But she admitted flexibility and transitional arrangements will be needed when inspections return.

“What we’re discussing is a sensible and proportionate next step before returning to our normal inspection programme in the autumn.”

Ofsted has been conducting remote monitoring inspections of schools graded ‘inadequate’ or ‘requires improvement’ since January 25, after ditching plans to conduct inspections in person.

## Fact check: Is Ofsted more likely to praise poorer schools’ leaders?

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, caused a stir last week after claiming that lower grades for schools in deprived areas was offset by praise for leaders.

Spielman said that Ofsted recognised the “relative strength” of schools in poorer areas by rating their leadership more highly – after admitting schools in more affluent areas were awarded better grades.

She said that analysis by the watchdog found “compared with more advantaged schools, disadvantaged schools are quite a lot more likely to have Ofsted rate their leadership and management more highly than their overall effectiveness”.

The watchdog told Schools Week it was unable to share the data as it had not been published publicly.

So, we attempted to replicate a study that could back up the claims. The number crunchers at Education Datalab analysed the inspection results of 1,389 primary and secondary schools between September 2019 and March 2020 (when inspections were halted).

The analysis removed any schools judged ‘outstanding’ – as their leadership grade cannot be higher than their overall grade. The number crunchers compared schools against the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) in the January 2020 census, broken down into five quintiles.

They found that 16 per cent of primary schools with the most disadvantaged cohorts were awarded higher leadership judgments than their overall grade, compared with just 5 per cent of the most affluent schools.

The trend was clearer at secondary level, where 26 per cent

### Ofsted inspections by free school meal cohort (excluding ‘outstanding’)

OFSTED PHASE	FSM QUINTILE (5 = HIGHEST % FSM)	TOTAL INSPECTIONS	% GRADED HIGHER FOR LEADERSHIP THAN OVERALL	% GRADED LESS THAN GOOD
Primary	1	158	5%	23%
Primary	2	165	6%	37%
Primary	3	215	10%	39%
Primary	4	222	12%	50%
Primary	5	329	16%	50%
Secondary	1	31	6%	29%
Secondary	2	46	11%	43%
Secondary	3	69	13%	54%
Secondary	4	80	23%	65%
Secondary	5	74	26%	68%
All schools	1	189	5%	24%
All schools	2	211	7%	38%
All schools	3	284	11%	43%
All schools	4	302	15%	54%
All schools	5	403	18%	53%

of schools with the poorest pupils were given higher leadership judgments, compared with just 6 per cent of schools with the most affluent intakes.

Spielman claimed the findings showed poorer schools’ “relative strengths” were recognised.

But Stephen Tierney, the chair of the Headteachers’ Roundtable, said there was a “real perception” among leaders in disadvantaged areas that a higher leadership judgment was “a condescending pat on the head”.

He added the overall judgement was “ultimately what schools live and die by” and Ofsted inspections were more suited to “provide narrative judgements” rather than grades.



# 'Flimsy' medical advice for Covid legal threat revealed

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EXCLUSIVE

The medical advice received by Gavin Williamson before he used emergency Covid powers to order a London council to keep its schools open has been branded "astonishing" for its lack of evidence.

The education secretary issued a "temporary continuation order" on December 14, ordering the London Borough of Greenwich to rescind its request for schools to move to remote learning for the final week of the autumn term.

It was the first use of the emergency powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020. However, the Act says that before using the sweeping powers, Williamson must "have regard to any advice" from government medical officers "relating to the incidence or transmission" of Covid.

The advice, released by the Department for Education after a Freedom of Information request by *Schools Week*, fails to note the transmission rates in the borough.

It also said closures would impact school testing, which was not rolled out until the following month. Just two of Greenwich's schools were involved in a pilot testing programme of more than 70 schools.

Dan Thorpe, the leader of the Labour-led Greenwich council, told *Schools Week* the advice was "astonishing" and "didn't stand up to any scrutiny whatsoever".

Dr Mary Bousted, joint general secretary of the National Education Union, added: "It is disturbing if emergency legislation is being used on such flimsy evidence and that leads me to conclude that this was a political imperative rather than what it should have been, a considered response to a local authority."

## 'You only get called into a Sunday meeting if there's trouble'

The DfE said it contacted Dr Jenny Harries, deputy chief medical officer for England, on Sunday, December 13, after Thorpe urged Greenwich schools to close.

Covid numbers were doubling every four days, with infections particularly hitting youngsters: 4,262 pupils and 362 staff were

Department for Education officials contacted Dr Jenny Harries, DCMO for England, on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December after Cllr Thorpe had written to all schools in Greenwich. Dr Harries agreed to enquire on a professional basis from the Regional Director for Public Health England (PHE) about the situation in Greenwich that evening, and subsequently clarified several key points for officials following that discussion. In particular, DCMO reported that:

- The Regional Director for Public Health (RDPH) was only made aware of action taken by Cllr Thorpe shortly before his discussion with Dr Harries. He had not seen the letter directly;
- The RDPH confirmed that all leaders of London councils had been briefed on the region's epidemiology, but there had been no direct advice from PHE to close schools;
- The RDPH informed her that London leaders had been asking for advice on schools risk management over the preceding two weeks and the RDPH had noted to them (a) that there was a national policy in place to keep schools open as a priority and (b) that closing schools can potentially also reduce the opportunities for using school testing programmes to manage disease transmission risk (by virtue of the fact children are not in school and available for testing); and
- DCMO had also noted with the RDPH that there are other similar balanced considerations relevant to school settings – for example that school settings are relatively controlled and therefore there can be greater or lesser risks in school closures depending on what children do in and out of school.

self-isolating at the time.

The DfE response shows Harries contacted Professor Kevin Fenton, the London regional director for Public Health England (PHE), to discuss the situation.

She reported Fenton confirmed all leaders of London councils had been briefed on the capital's epidemiology, "but there had been no direct advice from PHE to close schools". PHE said it is for the DfE to make decisions on school policy.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) said this was a routine briefing that provided a broad overview of epidemiology in the city.

But an email sent to London leaders prior to the meeting, seen by *Schools Week*, bills it as an "urgent Covid -19 briefing on the current position".

Thorpe told *Schools Week* there was a "very clear message" from PHE that London was "seeing exponential growth of the virus that demands immediate action".

"If that's not a moment to move, I'd struggle to know what is ... you only get called into a meeting on a Sunday if there's trouble."

Harries also informed the DfE that Fenton told her that London leaders had been asking for advice on schools risk management for two weeks, but had been told it was a national policy to keep schools open. Closing could reduce the opportunities for school testing programmes, the advice added.

Following the guidance provided,

the FOI states Williamson concluded the decision taken by Thorpe "was not supported by public health or scientific advice".

## 'No evidence, just narrative'

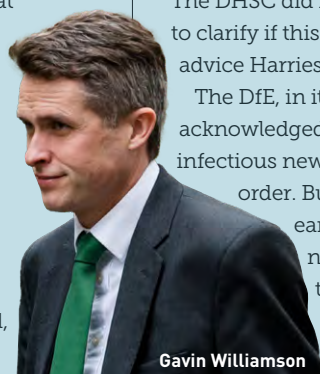
Thorpe said the minister's decision "doesn't seem to be based on any clear evidence or rationale" and questioned why no numerical values or transmission rates were included in the advice.

Karam Bales, a member of the NEU national executive, said: "There isn't any evidence, we just have a narrative referencing evidence we can't see."

In response to *Schools Week*, the DHSC said at the time the advice was issued, rates of transmission in Greenwich were lower than in other areas where schools remained open.

The FOI response notes that Harries, after contacting Fenton, "subsequently clarified several key points" for departmental officials. It then states that "in particular", that advice included the four points (pictured above) – suggesting there might be more advice that has not been revealed. The DHSC did not respond when asked to clarify if this was a full summary of the advice Harries offered.

The DfE, in its FOI response, again acknowledged it knew about the highly infectious new Covid variant before the order. But it said the "limited and early information about the new variant was not such to have an impact on the decision".



Gavin Williamson

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# 'It's a resigning issue': More chaos for Ofqual exam plans

**SAMANTHA BOOTH**

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Confidence in the government's exam replacement plans took another hit this week as it was confirmed that extra assessment materials provided by exam boards will be made public after Easter.

Ofqual and the Department for Education defended their plans to make the optional materials, based on past papers and unseen questions, available to students, after warnings it could put privileged pupils at an advantage.

The exams regulator was also forced this week to clarify that a move to tell pupils what evidence had been used to reach their grades did not mean there would be a "negotiation".

Schools are due to receive guidance on grading, with additional assessment materials, by the end of this month.

The DfE confirmed the materials would also be published online, but not until after Easter, to stop students "cramming" over the holidays.

The move to publish the materials, first mooted in the DfE and Ofqual's consultation on their plans, concerns Mark McCourt, a director at Advantage Schools. He said "middle-class kids" would be "tutored within an inch of their lives to rehearse perfect solutions".

Jon Coles, the chief executive of the United Learning Academy Trust, said it was "a resigning issue for anyone who cares about the integrity of the system".

"As soon as you have optional national assessments that are not subject to exam security and can be taken at different times in schools, this is the inevitable destination."

Sam Freedman, a former DfE adviser, said the "whole thing is a car crash".

But Ian Bauckham, the interim chair of Ofqual, defended the move, suggesting that looking through the materials could be a "good learning experience".

"If you take the average GCSE student, who might be doing eight, ten, twelve GCSEs, they're going to have to prep and memorise a vast amount of material," he told the annual conference of the school leaders' union ASCL.

"And actually perhaps if they did that, it might be a rather good learning experience for them. The key point is, this is not an examination year. These are not examinations, they are part of that toolkit."



Bauckham also said that because the materials would be used over a period of weeks, some would "inevitably" be leaked.

This would mean those that took them in "more secure conditions" near the start of the assessment window were disadvantaged, compared with those that took them later when they have been "freely circulating".

The Ofqual and DfE consultation on qualifications for this summer sought views on whether exam boards should publish all of

their papers shortly before the assessments "in order to manage the risk of some students being advantaged through papers being leaked".

Sixty-six per cent strongly agreed or agreed, while 17 per cent strongly disagreed or disagreed. The rest neither agreed nor disagreed.

Julie McCulloch, ASCL's director of policy, said there had never been any suggestion from Ofqual that the support materials would be "confidential".

She said it was a "sensible and practical approach" to a "potentially difficult logistical problem".

Bauckham also told the conference that evidence used to issue exam grades would not be a "topic for negotiation" between teachers and students.

The clarification comes after Simon Lebus, the acting chief regulator, told the education committee there would be an "opportunity for a student to say if they think that the evidence that has been used does not accurately reflect the best of their ability".

School leaders said this could result in more privileged parents trying to influence their children's grades.

## NO ADVANCE NOTICE OF TOPICS FOR AUTUMN EXAMS

This year's autumn exams will be similar to 2020, but with GCSEs potentially taking place later, Ofqual has proposed.

A two-week consultation, open until April 9, has also asked whether AS-level exams need to be offered this time, following low entries last year.

The government announced last month that an autumn series would go ahead for a second year for students unhappy with their teacher assessed grades.

It is proposed the series should be open to any student who entered or who had intended to enter exams this summer. They will be able to use the better of their summer or autumn grades.

But Ofqual said it had not yet decided on grading. Students will also not be given advance notice of topics, as was proposed for this summer before exams were cancelled.

## £200 FOR SCHOOLS TO HELP PRIVATE CANDIDATES

Schools will be able to claim a £200 grant per entry to cover the costs of assessing private GCSE and A-level candidates.

Ministers urged schools to help private pupils after the cancellation of this summer's exams.

It follows concerns that teacher assessment might disadvantage those not on roll at a school. Private candidates will be assessed in a similar way to other students this year.

The £200 is intended to cover the costs an eligible exam centre could incur because the assessment approach is different, along with the cost of any appeals.

At the end of March, the Joint Council for Qualifications will publish a list of schools with capacity to accept further private candidates. But schools do not need to be on the list to claim the grant.



# £7m for hundreds more cost cutters

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EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education will spend £7 million expanding its army of cost-cutting consultants by up to 600 – with a similar “mentor” scheme now to be rolled out for chief finance officers.

Tender documents show the government will soon invite bids from organisations to train 200 school resource management advisers (SRMA) a year until 2024.

A £7 million pot has been set aside for up to four organisations to handle accreditation, ensuring applicants have “appropriate skills and knowledge”.

The government will also “complement” the SRMA scheme with a chief finance officer “mentoring pilot” for chief financial officers (CFO) at academy trusts facing financial challenges. CFOs in new and growing trusts will also be eligible.

Matthew Clements-Wheeler, former chair of the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL), which currently accredits advisers, said the mentoring would be “really useful” for academy CFOs keen to skill up.

“The department’s pushing at an open door,” he added. “The decoupling from local authorities has left practitioners in smaller trusts with increased demands.”

The bidding process for a provider to run the 14-month mentoring scheme will begin within weeks. The department hopes to recruit at least 50 mentors.

“By providing sustained support, a CFO mentoring programme can play a key role in building capacity and capability for effective financial management within the academies sector,” procurement documents say.

Micon Metcalfe, one of the first cohort of SRMAs, said the move to mentoring would prove popular.

Academisation had made finance staff roles harder, she added, forcing them to navigate charity and company law.

“Regulations and expectations on academies are far greater than from local authorities,” she said.



The DfE said it is expanding the SRMA scheme “due to the success of the programme to date”. They said the contract would “involve both the continued supply of SRMAs already accredited and the recruitment and training of new SRMAs to support the programme”.

It seems to be an expansion from the current number. As of November 2019, 136 advisers had been accredited – with the option to recruit up to 220 able to deliver 1,300 deployments.

Advisers have to be accredited to ensure “they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to carry out the role”.

The new contract, which will start in September, “will also involve the development of a new training element” for candidates, tender documents state. However, no further information is included.

Initial reports from the SRMA programme proved controversial. Former academies minister Lord Agnew had claimed his advisers found £35 million of “essentially misdirected resources” in the pilot.

But Schools Week revealed one school had been told to replace experienced teachers with support staff to save money, with another advised to cut lunch portion sizes for pupils.

Figures provided in 2020 showed that advisers had identified £172 million of savings overall – averaging around £400,000 per visit.

However, a report into the pilot visits found schools were only able to implement 48 per cent of the savings within the next few years.

Clements-Wheeler welcomed the expansion, saying advisers deserved ‘national leader’ status, which headteachers and governors can achieve.

But he also sounded the alarm over forced adviser visits, saying schools had seen conditionality as “overly intrusive and unnecessarily bureaucratic”.

Schools Week revealed in 2019 that ministers were withholding £500,000 for vital repairs from 17 schools because they hadn’t agreed to a visit from the costcutters.

“I wouldn’t rule out the government moving the goalposts or imposing unexpected conditionality, but I’d strongly advocate they have dialogue,” Clements-Wheeler added. “If there’s a clear sensible rationale, leaders will respond well”

But Chris Billington, a partner specialising in education at Wrigleys Solicitors, said: “There’s only so much you can squeeze out of resources.”

He also questioned whether the scheme was the best use of the DfE’s funds, highlighting a “balancing act” between government intervention and issues schools themselves “ought to be dealing with” alongside their accountants and auditors.

Metcalfe added that many trusts were supportive of the visits, with advisers often helping schools integrate curriculum and financial planning to better deploy staff.

“Often at schools in difficulty you see not much strategic planning, not using tools to inform decisions and big leadership teams,” she added.

The DfE and ISBL were contacted for comment.

# DfE deletes controversial database

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EXCLUSIVE

The Department for Education has finally deleted its controversial migrant children database, years after the collection was scrapped.

Additional questions on nationality and country of birth were added to the school census in 2016, but removed in 2018 after a fierce backlash and boycott.

Ministers were accused of trying to extend the government's "hostile environment" immigration policy into schools after *Schools Week* revealed a secret plan to share the census data with the Home Office to aid enforcement.

Despite threats of legal action from campaigners, the DfE has refused to get rid of the data. But it confirmed this week that the records were deleted from the national pupil database (NPD) last autumn.

*Schools Week* understands the data was deleted at the urging of the Information Commissioner's Office.

Following a scathing audit of its data management last year, the department is reviewing all the personal data it processes to check it is used legally.

Kojo Kyerewaa, from the Schools Against Borders for Children campaign group, said: "We can and we must succeed in dismantling this government's hostile environment policies piece by piece. In this case, record by record."

After rushing through the changes to the school census in 2016, ministers initially denied that pupil nationality and country of birth would be shared with the Home Office.

But in late 2016, after many months of a freedom of information battle, the DfE admitted to *Schools Week* that there was such an agreement, but it was scrapped following a public backlash.

Jen Persson, the director of Defend Digital Me, said: "Data collected from children in schools is, in law, collected for educational purposes. Not ID checks. Not commercial distribution. Not policing. Not fraud detection. And not immigration enforcement."

Lara ten Caten, a human rights lawyer at Liberty, said children should be able to go to school "without fear and without needing to say where they were born or what their nationality is".

There was "still a long way to go", she said, pointing to the government use of some pupil



data for immigration enforcement.

"Data-sharing under the government's hostile environment means that schools are still passing children's data to the Home Office so that their families can be deported."

Attempts to create a hostile environment for immigrants was a key policy during Theresa May's tenure at the Home Office. One of her chief advisers, Nick Timothy, is now a non-executive director at the DfE.

This week's news comes after the ICO ruled the DfE had broken the law in the way it handled pupil data following an investigation that revealed widespread failures.

The audit, carried out in February and March last year, found that data protection "was not being prioritised", which had "severely impacted the DfE's ability to comply with the UK's data protection laws".

The sharing of data from the NPD with external organisations has been a subject of controversy for some years. Children's rights groups have called for it to be halted, despite their victory over the nationality and country of birth data collection.

However, while admitting governance failures, researchers have warned they are turning away from using the NPD for research purposes because of an increasing bureaucracy around accessing information.

Under its data-sharing process, the DfE releases anonymised sections of the NPD to organisations that request them. But the ICO found the reasons for doing so were not always justified.

Instead there was an "over reliance" on using "public task" as the lawful basis for sharing data, which was "not always appropriate and supported by identified legislation".

In its response to the ICO audit, the DfE said it was "conducting a full audit across the department to identify what personal data we use and that we are using it legally". The review is said to be nearing completion.

Persson wants the DfE to publish the full ICO audit findings "and be open about its failings and plans to fix them".

## TIMELINE

### ● SPRING/SUMMER 2016

Plans emerge for schools to collect data on pupils' nationality and country of birth. Ministers say data won't be shared with other departments

### ● AUTUMN 2016

Chaos in schools as data collection begins, with some wrongly asking for passports. DfE refuses to release data-sharing agreement with the Home Office

### ● DECEMBER 2016

DfE finally admits data-sharing agreement with the Home Office included nationality data, but it was removed on October 7

### ● DECEMBER 2017

Campaigners launch legal action. Data shows DfE failed to obtain data for a quarter of pupils

### ● APRIL 2018

*Schools Week* reveals DfE plans to end the collection in a major U-turn

### ● SEPTEMBER 2018

Human rights and privacy campaigners urge DfE to delete the data or face legal action

### ● OCTOBER 2020

ICO releases damning audit report, warning DfE broke data protection laws

### ● March 2021

DfE confirms nationality and country of birth data was deleted in autumn 2020

# Just the ticket (not): school trip funding plummets

TOM BELGER

@TOM\_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

School leaders say pupils will miss life-changing experiences with funding set aside for overseas trips slashed by two thirds under a new scheme.

The flagship £110 million Turing scheme, named after scientist Alan Turing, opened to applications last week. It replaces the EU's Erasmus+ programme.

Ministers say up to 35,000 students will be able to take part in international placements, however the majority of these would be at college and university.

Ecorys, which is co-delivering the scheme has said only £10 million had been set aside for schools, a 69 per cent decline on last year's Erasmus+ funding. Funds for staff training have been scrapped altogether.

Kevin Gilmartin, a post-16 and colleges specialist at the Association of School and College Leaders, said the Turing scheme should be a "great opportunity," but warned: "If it transpires funding has been cut, it will be a real blow to the future life chances of our young people."

When pressed for further information on the school funding figures this week, Ecorys seemed to backtrack saying the budget was actually "indicative" rather than ring-fenced, sparking confusion.

The Department for Education did not respond to requests for comment.

Paul Harrison, an external evaluator for Erasmus+, criticised the "unclear" allocations. "They've just produced guidance, and still we're having to ask questions. If it's not ringfenced it'll all go into higher education – schools will be the biggest losers."

The British Council, which helped run the old scheme and is co-delivering Turing, released figures showing UK schools received £32 million last year.

2020 funding also included £4.7 million for staff training, which is no longer available as the Turing scheme focuses on student opportunities.

Fewer pupils may be able to go abroad. The data shows more than 6,000 school students went on trips in 2018, the most recent year available. Only around 5,000 school pupil participants are expected under Turing.

"It's depressing. An Erasmus+ visit can



change your life," said Raquel Tola Rego, a teacher at Parkwood Primary School in Finsbury Park, east London.

The school takes up to 28 pupils a year to a Spanish village for a week. "They attend schools every day and have this incredible experience."

Tola Rego said the Turing scheme's £53-a-day pot for living costs may not go far enough in cities like Madrid. "Under Erasmus+ you said how much you'd pay for food, accommodation et cetera, and they'd take it into account."

Funding also does not cover overseas schools visiting the UK, sparking concerns about a scarcity of host schools. "If you're a French school, you're not going to come here if you've got to find the money when you could get funded to go to Germany," said Harrison.

The biggest frustration for many schools will be that programmes aimed at staff development or school improvement are no longer eligible, with Turing grants only covering staff to accompany pupils.

Parkwood staff, from the head to language teachers to cooks, have shadowed counterparts in Spanish schools, and teachers attended university crash courses on incorporating Spanish learning across the school. Art classes are now in Spanish, and school meals include Spanish cuisine.

It helped the school secure 'international Spanish school' status from the Spanish government. "When we came back people were full of ideas," she said. "There's lots that wouldn't happen if teachers weren't involved in exchanges."

"There's a sense it's a jolly, but they're going to places recognised as innovative. Our country clearly doesn't know it all," said Chris Andrew, the head of St James the Great

primary school in Thornton Heath, south London.

His school embraced outdoor learning after staff saw how it was done in Sweden. "Here forest schools are seen as brave, but there it's normal. We're an inner-city school, but you can still manage it."

Other staff learnt from Icelandic schools how to better involve parents in special needs support, while an Italian trip helped the school focus more on children working things out independently. "When they make a mess you sometimes see adults take over. It's about stepping back."

"You're going to get just a third of the children having those opportunities as before."

Harrison warned foreign languages teaching in primary schools would take a particular hit. "There's huge need – an awful lot of teachers dropped languages at 14; with Erasmus+ you could do an intensive language and teaching course abroad."

"But it's far from just languages. The whole lot's gone under Turing. I'm not sure schools have fully appreciated the impact yet."

Schools have also lost access to the Erasmus+ eTwinning platform, which allowed them to share learning resources and join projects with European partners.

Meanwhile there are concerns the May 7 deadline for applications leaves little time to devise plans, find partners and complete an unfamiliar application process.

But the government argues the Turing scheme offers new opportunities, focusing on global rather than largely European trips. It also says it will better target disadvantaged students.

Jane Racz, the British Council director for Erasmus+ and Turing, urged schools to apply, saying it could boost aspirations, attainment, language skills and cultural awareness.

"We believe schools will also appreciate the extra funding for disadvantaged students as these are often the pupils least likely to take part in a period abroad."

She said many schools already had international partnerships that could lead to Turing-funded trips, and those without could use the British Council's online partner-finding tool.

Additional reporting by Jess Staufenberg.



## Speed read

## DfE's Covid response left poorer pupils behind

The Department for Education has been told to take "swift action" and review its response to the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure poorer pupils are not left behind again. A National Audit Office report into how children were supported during the early stages of the pandemic has highlighted several flaws in the department's response. We look at the key findings

## 1 DfE ACTIVATED EMERGENCY PLANS FOR LOCAL DISRUPTION, SUCH AS FLOODING

The NAO found the DfE did not have a plan for managing "mass disruption" to schooling on the scale caused by Covid. Instead, in January last year it activated emergency plans for managing local disruption, such as flooding.



It was only at the end of June that it began to develop a plan setting out "objectives, milestones and risks at a departmental level". The NAO said the response was "largely reactive".

The DfE also put schools under pressure by publishing huge amounts of guidance, often without clarity on what had been updated and sometimes late in the evening. A *Schools Week* investigation last year found a quarter of changes were issued during anti-social hours.

Between mid-March and April 28 alone, the department published more than 150 new documents and updates to existing material.

## 2 QUESTIONS OVER HOW MANY POORER PUPILS WERE SIGNED UP TO THE NATIONAL TUTORING SCHEME ...

As *Schools Week* reported last week, the DfE did not stipulate how many pupil premium children should be reached this year through the flagship National Tutoring Programme (NTP).



The NAO said 125,200 children have been allocated a tutoring place across 3,984 schools – despite the government aim to reach between 200,000 and 250,000 youngsters.

Just 44 per cent of the 41,100 who had started to receive tuition were eligible for pupil premium.

"This raises questions over the extent to which the scheme will reach the most disadvantaged children," the report says.

When asked why two thirds of pupils had still not started receiving tutoring, the NTP said the percentage had gone up, but would not provide figures.

The DfE expects at least 65 per cent of tutoring next year will go to pupil premium children.

## 3 ... WHILE DEMAND FOR MENTORS 'OUTSTRIPPED SUPPLY'

Demand also "outstripped supply" for the academic mentoring arm of the tutoring scheme, run by Teach First.

As of January, Teach First had received requests for mentors from 1,789 eligible schools. By February, it had placed mentors in 1,100

schools – more than its 1,000 target, but still short of demand.

The government wants 3,600 academic mentors in schools next year.

## 4 FIFTH OF CATCH-UP FUNDING TAKEN FROM OTHER BUDGETS

The report also reveals how only 80 per cent of the £1 billion catch-up funding announced last year was additional money from the Treasury. The DfE took 20 per cent from "other budgets", the report says, although it does not state which areas.



The DfE said that the "majority" of its contribution came from "natural savings" across the year, rather than reductions elsewhere.

The government has kept quiet over why £140 million of the promised £350 million to run the NTP this year remained unspent, as revealed by *Schools Week*. The underspend has now been rolled over to run the scheme next year.

The report reveals the DfE decided it could not "scale up" the NTP schemes faster without "jeopardising delivery and quality of provision".

## 5 DfE SNUBBED £42M OF COVID COST CLAIMS

As of January, the department had paid, or intended to pay, schools £133 million of the £181 million claimed for exceptional Covid-19 costs between March and July last year.

The NAO said that within the £181 million, schools claimed £42 million outside recognised categories. The Covid cash came with tight restrictions, with things such as personal protective equipment, additional staff and technology for children's home learning not included.

## 6 COVID HELPLINE FELL OVER AT HEIGHT OF PANDEMIC

The report reveals that in the week of March 16 last year, there were 17,900 calls to the DfE's Covid helpline – an average of 3,600 a day.



Fifty-five per cent of callers hung up. Those who did not faced an average waiting time of 35 minutes.

A week later, the waiting time dropped to less than five seconds after the DfE increased the number of advisers staffing the helpline from about 90 to 300.

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# DfE refuses to release reports on school buildings

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

EXCLUSIVE

The government has been accused of “knee-jerk secrecy” after refusing to release reports on the condition of school buildings in England – leaving heads in the dark over future funding.

*Schools Week* requested copies of condition reports for 50 schools selected in the first year of the government’s ten-year rebuilding scheme. It comes after school leaders demanded clarity on how the projects were chosen.

But the Department for Education refused the request on the grounds that any release would breach “confidentiality of commercial or industrial information”, although the reports are routinely distributed to schools and are without instructions that they must not be shared or are commercially sensitive.

The DfE also claimed that publishing the reports would let construction companies “develop pricing models” before bidding for work. It would also “compromise the department’s ability to secure good value in their future discussions with contractors and other third parties”.

Under the government’s condition data collection (CDC), surveyors visited every state school in England between 2017 and 2019 to check their buildings, preparing a report for each one.

But neither the reports, nor any national data based on them, have been published. In 2017, the National Audit Office estimated it would cost £6.7 billion to bring all school buildings up to a satisfactory or better standard.

Questions were raised about how the £1 billion first wave of rebuilding projects were chosen after it was revealed a third of the schools were in marginal parliamentary seats, and two had recently had partial rebuilds.

Framwellgate School, in Durham, has been waiting more than a decade for major works after a rebuild planned under Labour’s Building Schools for the Future programme



## “It’s like waiting for a prize in the lottery”

was cancelled by Michael Gove in 2010.

The school’s 2018 CDC report, seen by *Schools Week*, highlighted multiple issues deemed “priority one”. These needed “immediate remedial action or replacement”.

Andy Byers, the school’s head, said he would have “no problem” if his report were published. “It’s important that we see the reports on condition on which the decisions are made.”

Instead, the DfE has said it will unveil another 50 rebuild projects this summer. It will then consult on how future waves of projects are selected. However, ministers are yet to confirm how much funding will be made available in future rounds.

Byers said he hoped the government did not continue to “drip-feed” announcements throughout the ten-year scheme. “It feels like every year is going to be like waiting for a prize in the lottery.”

*Schools Week*’s request for the condition reports was considered under the Environmental Information Regulations Act 2004, which gives any member of the public

the right to request access to environmental information held by public authorities.

In turning down the request, the DfE cited section 12(5)(e) of the regulations, which says authorities can refuse to give information if it would adversely affect “the confidentiality of commercial or industrial information where such confidentiality is provided by law to protect a legitimate economic interest”.

But Tim Turner, a data protection law expert from 2040 Training, said the department had to prove the information was confidential, which it had not done. He said its response was “fatally flawed”.

“It has to show a duty of confidence between the schools and the DfE, a legal prohibition or perhaps a valid confidentiality agreement (which it would need to justify). It has nothing to fill this gap.

“Without a sound justification that the data is confidential, this refusal is fatally flawed. It’s a disappointing but not surprising example of knee-jerk secrecy.”



# Pupil premium change strips £180m from primary budgets

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR\_93

Primary schools across England could lose £180 million to help vulnerable pupils after the government changed its method of calculating pupil premium cash, a new survey suggests.

The NAHT, the school leaders' union, warned that Covid-19 recovery funding in most primary schools would be "wiped out" by a budget gap following the policy change.

MPs, councils and unions have demanded the government change its "ill-thought through and discriminatory" policy switch, while ministers have remained tightlipped on how much schools could lose and seem determined to plough ahead.

Paul Whiteman, the NAHT's general secretary, said: "The government must put this right. We aren't asking for additional money here... If it doesn't it will be abandoning those children most in need at the most critical time."

On the final day of the autumn term the Department for Education revealed that from April it would calculate the number of children eligible for pupil premium funding based on the October census, rather than the January census.

Any pupils who become eligible for free school meals between October and January will not be factored in.

## Catch-up cash swallowed up by change

An NAHT survey last week of 1,316 primary school leaders revealed 62 per cent of respondents had five or more pupils become eligible for pupil premium between the October and January census.

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

The survey suggests that the loss of pupil premium would swallow up most Covid recovery funding.

Last month the government introduced a new £302 million "Covid recovery premium" that would be allocated on the same basis as pupil premium. It said the average primary school would receive £6,000.

But the NAHT's survey suggests most would lose at least £6,725.

Whiteman added: "The government is giving with one hand while knowingly taking away



with the other ... given the volatile financial situation for many families due to Covid-19, it is an exceptionally bad time to implement this change."

The survey broke down the percentages of respondents that claimed to have more pupils eligible for pupil premium.

For example, 8 per cent said they had gained ten or more FSM pupils, while 9 per cent said they had 21 more.

Extrapolating these percentages on to the 16,784 primary schools open in England suggests a loss to schools of just under £180 million.

Campaigner Andy Jolley previously estimated the change could amount to as much as £250 million across all schools.

## MPs wait for DfE explanation

The DfE said the change would deliver increased funding to schools because more pupils were eligible than last year. The use of October data was "helping them [schools] plan ahead" as they knew their budget earlier in the year.

During the Education select committee on February 9, Ian Mearns, the Labour MP for Gateshead, received a commitment from Nick Gibb, the schools minister, that he would write to the committee with the data on the impact of moving the census date.

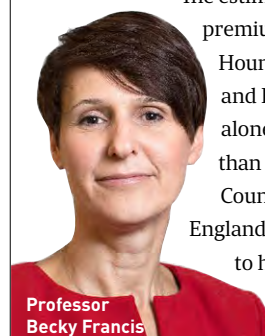
Five weeks later and the committee is still waiting for a response. A committee spokesperson said there was no set timescale for correspondence.

Professor Becky Francis, the chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, urged the government to monitor the rate of pupil premium eligibility to ensure schools had the resources they needed.

"At a time when schools are facing monumental challenges, the additional funding they get through the pupil premium has never been more important."

Meanwhile, 15 London councils last week wrote to Gavin Williamson requesting that the education secretary "reconsider this ill-thought through, and discriminatory policy change", which was an "attack on the poorest children in our schools".

The estimated loss of pupil premium across Ealing, Hounslow, Lewisham, Merton and Barking and Dagenham alone is estimated to be more than £3.5 million. Councils in the north of England are also understood to have complained to Williamson.



Professor Becky Francis

# News

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## DfE laptop firm sees profits soar to £207m

JAMES CARR  
@JAMESCARR\_93

The firm handed a major government contract to supply laptops for schools has hailed a record year after pre-tax profits soared by nearly 50 per cent to £206.6 million.

Computacenter, founded by Conservative Party donor Sir Philip Hulme, has so far been awarded £198 million worth of contracts to deliver devices under the Department for Education's flagship scheme. The first contract came under scrutiny after being awarded without an open tender process.

Financial results for 2020, published this week, show that "new business within the public sector" and "improving" margins for its technology-sourcing service have contributed to a record year.

Pre-tax profit leapt by 46.5 per cent to £206.6 million, with the group's UK arm of the business faring better than its counterparts.

Mike Norris, Computacenter plc chief executive, said the "excellent results" show that the firm's "2020 performance has exceeded all expectations... 2020 has seen the fastest profit growth Computacenter has achieved in its 22 years as a public company".

Shareholders are now set for a windfall with a 402 per cent jump in dividends also announced. Investors will be handed a full-year pay-out of 50.7p a share, after only receiving 10.1p a share last year.

The company resumed dividend payments last October after halting them when the pandemic first struck.

The findings are likely to fuel concerns around the profit made by firms handed government contracts during Covid. The government is under pressure to reveal details of contracts worth over £2 billion awarded to "donors and cronies".

The DfE has also been criticised for its sluggish response to providing laptops to vulnerable and disadvantaged youngsters. The department failed

on its promise to provide 230,000 laptops by the end of June last year.

The government has also failed to deliver the full quota of its increased 1.3 million promised laptops – despite schools reopening fully last week.

Computacenter's results show its UK arm "saw an increase in revenues of 11 per cent as technology-sourcing revenues surged to cope with the demand generated by the Covid-19 crisis".

The results added that "strong services margins", due to "increased utilisation and reduced external contractor costs and improving technology sourcing margins", led to an increase in adjusted operating profit of 40.2 per cent for the year. By comparison, its German arm saw overall revenues decline by 2.5 per cent, France had "a difficult year", while North America also "saw a weaker than expected year, with a marked reduction in activity".

But revenues from public sector customers in the UK, Germany and France, increased by around 37 per cent – "offsetting material falls in revenue" from industrial customers, the report explained.

The public sector accounted for 32 per cent of the firm's revenues, compared with 25 per cent in 2019.

It adds: "The UK, in particular, has seen very strong demand within public sector and financial services, as organisations relied heavily on the group to urgently support their technology-sourcing needs."

The financial report also shows the company received £1.1 million from the government's furlough scheme. However, this was repaid in the second half of last year "once the board was assured of the company's ongoing resilience in the face of the pandemic".

Computacenter, which is listed as an approved supplier within the government's Crown Commercial Service framework, and the DfE did not respond to requests for comment.

## Heads' warning over uniform sole suppliers after climbdown

FREDDIE WHITTAKER  
@FCDWHITTAKER

Statutory guidance on school uniforms must minimise the cost of clothes bought through "sole supplier" deals, say school leaders.

Their warning came after the government announced it would not ban the controversial contracts, an apparent climbdown from a pledge to tighten the contracts.

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, told MPs he would instead ask leaders to re-tender at least every five years.

A draft law requiring the government to issue statutory guidance on the cost of uniforms passed its third reading in the Commons last Friday.

The bill, introduced by Labour MP Mike Amesbury, is supported by the government. Current guidance is non-statutory.

Gibb said that ministers "don't intend to ban sole supplier contracts".

This is despite his former colleague Lord Agnew vowing in 2019 to "go after" the "monopoly-type deals" that campaigners say lead to increased costs for families.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the NAHT school leaders' union, said it was "essential" that the proposed guidance minimise the "expense of school uniform and other kit".

"Where schools have contracts with single suppliers for these items, prices should not be artificially inflated and should be as low as possible."

The government has not yet published draft statutory guidance, but Gibb last week revealed some of its proposed contents.

On sole supplier arrangements, he said schools "should be able to demonstrate that they have obtained best value for money in their supply arrangements".

To ensure "competition and transparency", the government wanted schools "to regularly tender their school uniform contracts at least every five years".

He said current advice that branded items be kept to a minimum would become statutory. Schools should also ensure parents could buy secondhand uniforms, but the statutory guidance would not require it.

Any changes to policy will not be in place in time for the next academic year.



# EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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## Ofqual chiefs' conflicting messages does not bode well

This week has seen more new and worrying information emerge about the government's plans to replace exams this year.

First, the Department for Education confirmed additional assessment materials from exam boards will be published for all to see after Easter, just weeks after schools are due to receive them.

There was also a statement from the Ofqual chair that there must not be any "negotiation" between teachers and students over the evidence used in reaching their grades. A sensible thing to say, right?

But, given Ofqual's interim chief regulator Simon Lebus had previously said there's "opportunity" for students to "say if they think evidence used does not accurately reflect the best of their ability", it instead looks garbled and confused.

This is not what's needed with the exam replacement plans already on thin ice. Thousands of children cannot be failed again.

Which brings us to the key question: why didn't ministers have a gold standard plan B ready to go when schools closed?

## Mechanism to rein in Covid powers is worthless

The lack of medical advice to inform Gavin Williamson's legal action against Greenwich Council last year is extremely troubling.

The government handed itself sweeping powers over schools under the Coronavirus Act 2020. If Williamson wanted, he could order a school to close, or remain open.

The addition of a caveat to ensure action was only taken once advice from government medical officers had been taken on board was supposed to be a stopper to powers being abused.

But the findings this week that the advice was utterly lacking suggests it's nothing more than lip service.

What this means is that, actually, politicians can do what they damn well like - regardless of what the science says.

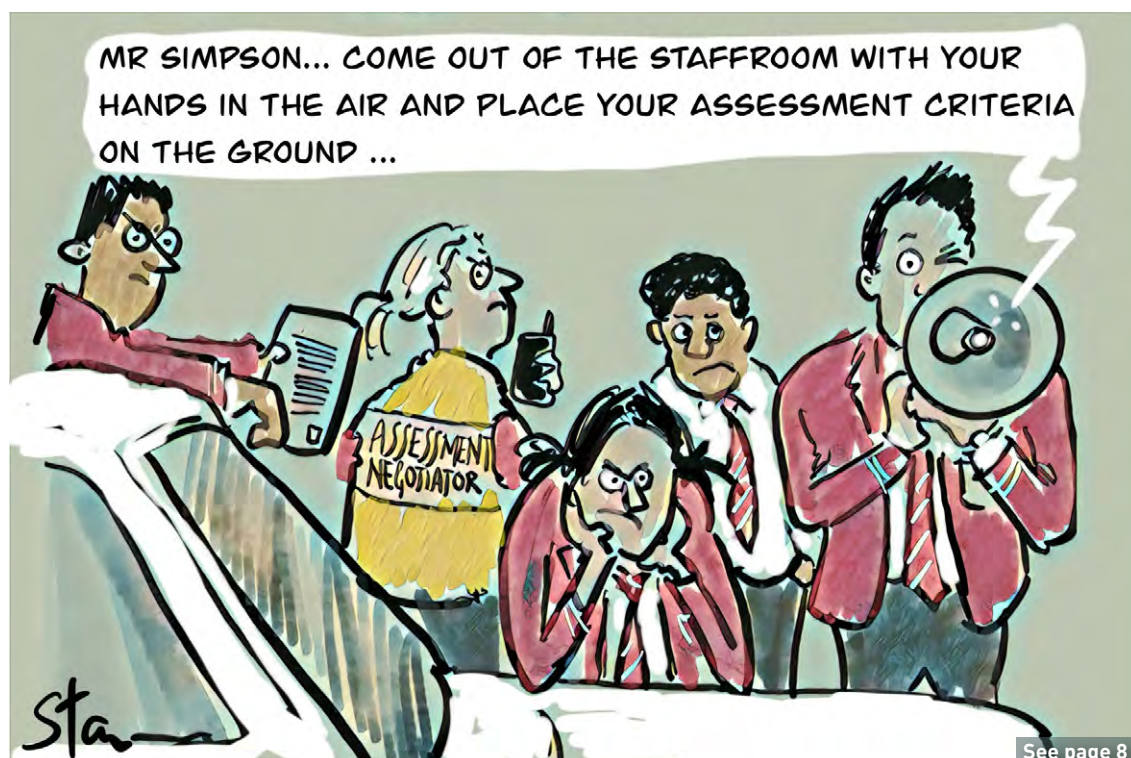
Such power being in Williamson's hands - without a proper mechanism from scientists to rein him in - is a scary thought.

The sooner Covid emergency powers are locked away, the better.

SCHOOLS WEEK



Get in touch.



See page 8

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## Teacher and leadership pay can no longer be ignored

**Gwyneth Morgan-Chan**

There is also a need for recognising the professional status of teaching assistants and learning support assistants, because they are often teaching small groups and yet their pay, conditions and contracts do not reflect the work that they do. They are often poorly paid, term-time hours, only related to the time in the classroom, even though they often work longer than class time with students, which they are not paid for.

## Why a five-term year works so well (as long as we all do it)

**Henry Walton**

Not sure I would want that cycle/structure, but generally I agree, more even breaks would be better for staff and pupils. Starting next year, please.

## Spielman says deprived schools' lower grades offset by leadership praise

**Mangal Singh**

All said and done, even after their own analysis of grades across the strata of different schools, Ofsted are still refusing to recognise that the judgment of overall effectiveness is deeply flawed, particularly if you are working in schools in deprived areas. We continue to hope and pray for a system rooted in genuine school improvement, free of political machinations, with levers of support and not sticks to beat you with.

**James Mook**

This makes little sense. If leadership is good, why is the quality of education not good? What is the difference? "The experience students get is absolute" and often judged lower than the leadership of the school. What is the confounding factor? Is the message ultimately: "If you want a better standard of education for your child, move to a 'better' part of town?"

## REPLY OF THE WEEK

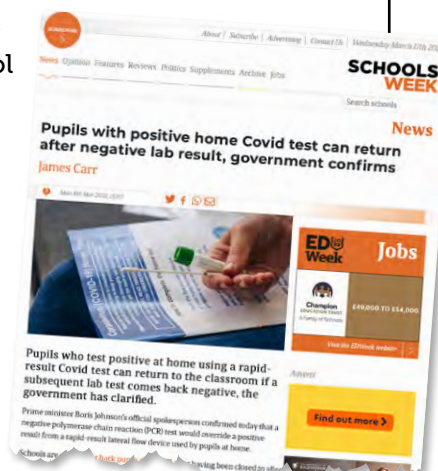
**Alison Morse**

### Pupils with positive home Covid test can return after negative lab result, government confirms

My daughter has been sent home from school along with 40 others because one child had a positive lateral flow test now proven to be a false positive by a PCR test. They all have to isolate for ten days yet none of them have Covid-19.

What a nonsense!!

The government needs to quickly change this illogical piece of guidance.



**Terry Pearson**

So, there we have it. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector confirms that grades awarded during inspections are dubious. Overall effectiveness is deemed by the inspectorate to be an 'absolute' grade and leadership is deemed to be a 'relative' grade. Consequently, not only are 'disadvantaged' schools awarded lower overall effectiveness grades, but 'advantaged' schools are awarded lower leadership grades!

This should not be surprising to many working in education. For a period of almost 30 years Ofsted has not been able to validate the reliability of the grades it awards.

## Research: How to ensure more disadvantaged students succeed

**Andy Mellor**

I wouldn't disagree with what Rebecca has written here, but let's not pretend that those with mental health and wellbeing barriers to learning (one in five now) can access all of this without some of those barriers being removed. We know that disadvantaged children especially in deprived areas are likely to have greater barriers to learning and accessing all of what Rebecca describes, and we need to address this before we implement high-quality teaching. Simplifying 'disadvantaged' as just being further behind underestimates the barriers to learning which we would plan for if a child had a SEND barrier to learning.



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# Profile

JESS STAUFENBERG | @STAUFENBERGJ

Brannel School

Fowey P

## 'My forthright manner wasn't always conducive to working with the department'

The straight-talking chief executive at Cornwall Education Learning Trust opens up about two years as a regional schools commissioner and sitting behind the closed doors of headteacher board meetings. By Jess Staufenberg

Lisa Mannall does not scream 'civil servant'. But, for two years up until 2019, that's what she was: one of eight regional schools commissioners tasked with overseeing school interventions to approving trust takeovers in their oddly shaped patches (London, for instance, is split between three RSCs).

The job description has grown and then shrunk since the posts were announced by then education secretary Michael Gove in 2014, but one thing that has stuck is the accusation they are opaque (important

decisions taken about the future of schools are made behind the closed doors of headteacher board meetings, for instance).

That just doesn't seem to fit with Mannall. At one point we discuss a more accurate description for her than "blunt", and ponder "forthright". It is better: she's not cutting, but she does finish the interview grinning that she'd better read the final article "with her hard hat on". This is someone who's received emails with new ideas from civil servants and replied with "no". "What is the point of writing lots and lots of words? If it's not

going to work, just say that, clearly."

It hints to why Mannall left the role as RSC for the south west after just a couple of years to become chief executive at Cornwall Education Learning Trust. She actually lasted longer than her predecessors Sir David Carter, who went on to become national schools commissioner, and Rebecca Clark, who also joined an academy trust.

The churn of RSCs leaving for a top job in the academy sector they were tasked with overseeing has been decried as a "revolving door". (Mannall agrees a "cooling off" period



## Profile: Lisa Mannall



In Croatia June 2018



Sydney 2016

between any such moves is a good idea in principle, only pondering how she would pay her mortgage in the meantime.)

But for Mannall, the RSC job had changed from one encompassing school support and improvement, to just a regulatory role. And there were frustrations, too. "The civil servants in the regional teams were amazing, but those in Sanctuary Buildings have a disconnect with schools," she added. Not wanting to become disconnected herself, she returned to school leadership.

Born into a "tight-knit" family of fish wholesalers for Billingsgate Market in London, Mannall describes a happy childhood in which she was "mostly in jodhpurs" because her grandfather kept racehorses in Essex. She passed through school with relative ease.

By 18 she wanted to go to university. "But Mum was convinced that if I went, I'd be a drug addict by Christmas," she laughs. Instead, her parents persuaded her to stay at home and by 25 she was working in insurance, not enjoying it, and was a single parent. The sort of no-nonsense, mustn't-complain attitude Mannall emanates now must have been in evidence back then,



In Exeter 2020

### "In all my professional life, it was my steepest learning curve"

because she got into Middlesex University, juggling an English degree with parenting and working as cabin crew at Luton Airport. She recalls a powerful moment after dropping her daughter off at pre-school. "As I drove away I thought, what sort of role model do you want to be for her? I knew I wanted to be a teacher."

Mannall quickly rose up the ranks. By 35 she was interviewing for a deputy head job, heavily pregnant. She got it. "That was a big risk for them, and very impressive of them to give it me," she says. It seems to reflect just as impressively on Mannall though, too.

By the time Gove was announcing his new RSCs, Mannall was heading an infant school in Newquay, which she had taken from 'requires improvement' to 'outstanding' in eight terms. "Bizarrely, I was in the criteria" to join a headteacher board, she chuckles.



Ralph and Tutu, Mannall's two border collies

The boards have eight members: four elected by local academy leaders, as Mannall was, two appointed by the RSC and two "co-opted" with DfE approval. She still has the election card with her name on it.

So, what's it like to be behind those closed doors of a headteacher board meeting?

"In all my professional life, it was my steepest learning curve. I didn't know the whole of the south west, I'd never worked in a secondary school. And, of course, I had no understanding of the civil service," says Mannall.

She gives the idea that they are murky, unaccountable bodies short shrift. "I think people think there's far more dark arts going on in headteacher boards than there really are. In the minutes you can't put, and then so-and-so said, 'don't let them do that, they're not very good'; you can only put the

# Profile: Lisa Mannall



Dublin 2019



Mannall in Dartmoor 2020

outcome of a decision. I understand why people don't think they're very transparent, but there's nothing especially devious going on.

"No one person, such as RSCs, can have all the intelligence about a local area. The headteacher board is meant to have a spread of expertise from all the sectors, so things don't get skewed."

It was occasionally an anxious business. "There were times when I probably felt nervous about the decisions we were making. I could always understand why we had to make them, but sometimes we were unpicking those early decisions afterwards. But you can't predict failure four or five years in advance."

Mannall particularly learnt from watching Carter. She recalls his advice around a school wanting to take over a pre-school. "David went back to the civil servant and said, 'what do the parents want? If they think it's a good



At Ivybridge Community College in 2017 when RSC

## "People think there's far more dark arts going on in headteacher boards than there really are"

idea, that will be the decision'. He put the children first."

But Mannall believes both her predecessors were effective because they had proven school leadership backgrounds. By the time she was appointed an RSC in 2017, she had been both a chief executive and executive principal. But she warns: "Many RSCs now don't come from a school leadership background."

In another shift in the role, as the school leader RSCs left to go back into schools, they were mostly replaced by people working for councils or already in government roles.

That's now evident at the top, too, as Carter has been replaced by Dominic Herrington, a former consultant at Capgemini Consulting who has been a senior civil servant since 2006.

Mannall pulls no punches in saying there is now a void for that school voice in the civil service. "We're missing someone who stands up and fights for us. Sir David Carter felt like the leader. We've got the unions, but we're not all in the same union and they don't all get on. It feels like that's missing."

She also talks fondly of former academies minister Lord Agnew, who she said was "really good. He was really strong at governance. Everything he did bring in was to prevent failure. My highlight was once a

month when we'd be led in there like school children, and he'd know everything."

Going back to the lack of a school voice, Mannall adds this is why headteacher boards are more important than ever. "I think they're a really good part of the system – they're there to challenge and inform." But just how informed? RSCs were given expanded intervention powers in 2015, but complaints over them operating as a "shadow Ofsted" led to this being scrapped in 2018. Instead, RSCs would only be put into action when schools had been told they were failing by Ofsted.

Yet Mannall says this had the side effect of blindfolding the board and RSCs. "I do understand why schools felt they were being held to account by too many people. But at the same time, all the school improvement part was taken out. I felt less able to get the information I needed. And it was really hard to stand back and await failure."

One wonders whether some of the most robust voices, such as hers, have left the regional schools commissioner offices and headteacher boards. "Sometimes my forthright manner wasn't always conducive to working with the department." Perhaps we should cheer what some RSCs had been quietly getting up to a little more – and worry what their exits might mean.



# Opinion

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?  
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**ALAN GARNETT**  
Headteacher, North Primary School  
and Nursery, Colchester

## Catch-up? It's all ambition and no imagination

**'Recovery' should not mean recovering a system we intend to reform in the coming years anyway, writes Alan Garnett**

The greatest shake up in education since 1944. 'Transformative,' promises the secretary of state. There is the ambition, but where is the imagination? Extended schooldays, cramming tutorials, summer schools, a five-term year...

That's the rescue package? It sounds more like punishment. As my daughter remarked, "Great, the last thing we want when we get our summer back is to go to school!" And she's a 16-year-old with a remarkable work ethic. She is desperate to get into her sixth-form classrooms and common room.

How quickly the 'recovery plan' morphed into a 'catch-up programme'. Who will catch up exactly? To what, or to whom? By when? And what is the rush? Exams at 16? Wasn't a major rethink of these long overdue even before Covid?

I am heartened by 'education recovery tsar' Sir Kevan Collins' comments so far, in particular on what infants have missed. But unless his approach is to stimulate a great debate, I fear the solutions won't be equal to the problems.

The government's slogan is 'build back better'. But thinking only about what the children have missed – and in a narrow curricular sense at that – will not deliver that. Take the early years sector, for example. Ministers are on record as saying it is 'vital', yet seem to be in complete denial that it has been devastated by lockdown and successive years of underfunding. The foundations of a recovery plan must be laid there. There is an obvious solution. It's talked about everywhere in hushed tones like some dangerously radical

**“Let's defer the start of the September 2021 cohort**

idea, and it is anything but. But time is running out, so let me be the one to put it out there: defer the start of the September 2021 cohort.

From today, that would give us five months to rejuvenate and expand the early years sector. Our three- and four-year-olds would start school a year later, in September 2022. It would give them the time to re-establish pre-school routines, bring us in line with other high-performing nations and create jobs too!

Our current reception cohort, who missed six months of pre-school



and a big chunk of reception, will be able to complete it from now and through next year. With the extra time, they won't just catch up but finish ahead! And with more time for those crucial personal and social experiences that are the building blocks for their future learning to boot.

The rest of the primary sector could also complete their year over

the meantime.

They have to stay in full-time education or its equivalent until the age of 18 anyway, so let's ask them what they want. The EEF tells us feedback is a low-cost tool with a high effect size. Why should that only be the case for classroom practice? They deserve a reward for their forbearance and sacrifices over the past year. Tutoring, weekend lessons and holiday cramming clubs are not that. If 'recovery' means nothing more ambitious than catch-up then we will make that lazy label, 'the lost generation' a self-fulfilling prophecy. We can and must do better.

Every cohort has missed out, so any recovery plan must be universal. And it won't do for 'recovery' to mean recovering a system we intend to reform in the coming years anyway.

A big debate may seem impossible. The timeline only makes it appear more so. But as Nelson Mandela said, it always seems impossible until it's done. If Sir Kevan's appointment is to mean anything, it should be the start of some real political ambition.



# Opinion

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DR FEYLYN LEWIS

Research Fellow, School of Education and Social Work, University of Sussex

## How to ease the transition back to school for young carers

**Young carers' needs are heightened, and Long Covid could mean many more join their ranks. Feylyn Lewis sets out how to support them back into class**

The interminable months of lockdown have been difficult for everyone. But for the estimated 800,000 plus young carers in England, these have been some of the most challenging times of their young lives. School staff now have a very delicate task in helping to support the mental health challenges wrought by the pandemic as they return to school.

Here are four pinch points that are common to young carers' experiences, and how to help them get past them.

### Increased isolation due to loss of respite opportunities

New research conducted by Carers Trust found that 69 per cent of young carers are feeling less connected to others since the outbreak. In large part, this is because they experienced heightened isolation during lockdowns due to the removal of respite activities.

Providing students with ample opportunities to have fun with their peers, such as structured games and

extended time for friendly catch-up, will ease their transition back to the classroom. In fact, for these students, catching up with friends will be as important as catching up with the curriculum. Perhaps even more so.

“Many fear bringing the virus home to their vulnerable families

### Added stress due to home learning

While many have struggled with new modes of learning, young carers have juggled that with caring for their family. There are widespread reports of young carers sharing devices with other family members (if they have access to a device at all), and of poor wi-fi speeds.

Teachers can best support young carers by minimising the technology needed at home to complete assignments and setting aside time in the school day for them to access computers when they are necessary.

Understanding that this is a time of competing priorities, teachers could also offer flexible deadlines, opening the door to proactive, rather than retroactive, communication about young carers' needs.



### Covid-19 anxiety adds to mental health toll

While media attention has largely focused on adults contracting Covid, research has shown that children could be infected with the virus and pass it on to others. Young carers have reported significant

anxiety about spreading the virus to their disabled family members, with 40 per cent of young carers and 59 per cent of young adult carers saying their mental health has worsened since the outbreak.

While the vaccine rollout has now reached most vulnerable adults, many young carers are fearful that their interactions at school could bring the virus home to their already vulnerable families. And if they fall ill, who will take care of the person they care for?

Continuing to stringently ensure buildings are as Covid-safe as possible, clear and explicit communication, and ensuring their peers don't get prematurely complacent (in or out of schools) will reassure young carers and their families. Schools may be back, but lockdown rules still apply.

### Ending lockdown brings only partial relief

The ONS estimates 1 in 10 who contract the virus will continue to experience symptoms for three months or longer. Family members and friends with long Covid will require ongoing care that could turn thousands of UK children into first-time young carers. These new young carers are unlikely to self-refer to dedicated, formal support services and will carry on with their new-found responsibilities alone, unsupported and unrecognised.

School staff can play a crucial role by identifying new young carers and referring them to social services. If a student or their family member is experiencing a significant impact due to Covid, schools can play a vital role in informing them of the opportunity to receive help through a formal service.

The return to school will bring a range of emotions for all young people and for their teachers too. For young carers, the range is wider and the intensity heightened.

Throughout the pandemic, schools have invested heavily in building relationships with vulnerable young people and their families. The reopening of schools is not the end of that work, but the beginning of a new phase.

# Opinion

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DR KATE  
CHHATWAL OBE

CEO, Challenge Partners

## Back to normal? We can surely do much better

**Government announcements and noises off don't inspire confidence that ministers have learned the lessons of lockdown, writes Kate Chhatwal**

A whole year. Anyone who has been listening to schools in that time will have learned important lessons – lessons that make snapping back to the 'old normal' neither desirable nor practical. As they reopen, knee-jerk reactions to the challenge of 'catch-up' are just as misled.

My colleague, Dame Sue John never fails to remind me that to plot a course to 'better', you have to know where you are starting from. The truth is that we don't. Yet.

We know pupils haven't covered the curriculum content we'd expect. We know they've had different experiences of learning remotely. But we don't yet know how wide or deep those gaps are or what it will take to close them. We also haven't yet understood the things students might have gained from the past year. Why assume the experience has all been bad?

That is why many schools are taking their time to understand what their pupils are bringing back to the classroom, rather than jumping on the bandwagon of

summer schools or extended school days and terms. Instead, they are keen to seize the opportunity to focus on the life-affirming, character-building, cultural and social experiences denied their students by the restrictions of lockdown.

Many leaders I speak to felt that the autumn term, though difficult

and disrupted, was an opportunity seized to accelerate learning. They are optimistic this feat can be repeated given the flexibility to use 'catch-up' funding to meet the needs of their school communities, unconstrained by expectations that they subscribe to government initiatives. If ministers can trust teachers to assess students in place of high-stakes examinations, surely they can trust them with the important prior task of equipping them to succeed?

Blended approaches are offering enhancements to learning and school life that will surely outlast the pandemic. We know some children flourished working remotely at their own pace. It



has also offered opportunities for parental engagement like never before, especially for younger children and those with special educational needs. Schools have led these advances and must be given the time and trust to continue to build on them, not herded by a central government strategy.

Digital ways of working have benefited schools as well as their students. They have unlocked the ability to share ideas and expertise faster and further than ever. And as

and 'orphaned' schools, rather than an impulse to corral schools into trusts.

Amid the accelerated pace of the past year, we have been blown away that leaders have made time to share while innovating on the fly. We've seen them provide insights and approaches that saved colleagues precious time and headspace. We have witnessed trust leaders sharing impressive programmes to support pupil mental health; headteachers blogging on leading through crisis; and senior leaders running webinars on preparing for life after special school. When we hosted US education leaders sharing their insights on transforming through crisis after Hurricane Katrina, the session was full.

Schools have risen magnificently to every challenge thrown at them, showing agility and creativity. Pointed in the right direction, the acceleration we have seen in schools and the system could speed us into a better future where excellence and equity go hand-in-hand, provided we learn from each other what really works.

If we've learned anything from it all, it is surely that too much time has been wasted on league tables and competition. It is only by working together that we will ensure all children have the best (re)start in life.

**“ Schools should not be herded by a central government strategy ”**

well as this national – sometimes global – networking, we've seen how effective strong local collaboration is.

The past year has shown the benefits of facing novel challenges together. Facilitating connections for potentially left-out schools and building a network of collaboration, knowledge exchange and mutual accountability is what we do. Challenge Partners is home to more than 100 academy trusts and a wide range of other local improvement partnerships. We know what matters is that collaboration happens, not the legal structures it happens within. The systemic drive should be to ensure we are not left with underserved

# Opinion

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MATT  
DAVIS

Regional director UK,  
Education Development Trust

## How the Covid recovery will be school-led

**It's a change that has garnered little attention, but the new Teaching School Hubs could transform the way we improve teaching and schools, writes Matt Davis**

Lateral flow tests and the removal of the mute function from their classrooms might be dominating teachers' attention this week, but schools are reopening to a potentially transformative change that has gathered few headlines.

A fortnight ago, as the drum beats of reopening were pounding, the Department for Education announced 87 designated Teaching School Hubs (TSHs) and several organisations, including mine, who would work with them on professional development programmes. Far from bureaucratic fiddling, these changes may come to be seen as a really important step towards the realisation of the long-trailed school-led system.

The most recent announcement is founded on two fundamental assumptions. First, that the best people to affect change locally are excellent current practitioners. Second, that the delivery infrastructure for that change should be schools themselves. This is the school-led system in action.

Some will ask whether the job

wasn't already being done by teaching schools. The answer is that individual teaching schools have done some incredible work, but that uneven distribution has meant their impact has been patchy. A model with fewer organisations, more or less equally distributed, with an obligation written in to serve all schools within their defined areas, promises to make the model more

“Teaching School Hubs will be a key resource to help close the equity gaps

sensible and fairer.

The other big change is focus. Arguably the biggest challenge facing teaching schools has been the lack of precisely defined objectives. The next phase makes these clearer. TSHs will “provide high-quality professional development for teachers at all stages of their careers”. In the main, these will be focused on ITT and the suite of EEF-endorsed professional development programmes. This refocussing has the potential to do an enormous amount of good in support of teaching quality.

Convinced of the idea, many will still be concerned about the timing. Isn't now the worst time in living memory to embark on a change like this? But this September, new



teachers will once again be entering the classroom following a heavily disrupted training experience. The jury is out on what the impact will be overall on teacher numbers, but the challenges presented by Covid are likely to heighten existing inequalities and regional disparities.

So now is the time to work out how we support every member of the

make an impact. Locally invested and connected organisations are the ones with the capacity and experience to make these initiatives really fly. TSHs will be a key resource to help close equity gaps exacerbated by the pandemic.

The concept of the school-led system is one with widespread buy-in. More than any other policy I can think of, it is regarded as inarguably sensible by the sector itself. A whole generation of leaders regard this truth as self-evident and their expertise continues to evolve with the policy.

The commitment to working collaboratively and locally has only strengthened throughout the pandemic. TSHs create a vehicle for schools to band together regionally – to reinforce, reset or create new partnerships – to maximise their impact on teaching quality, recruitment and retention.

We've explored the strengths and limits of autonomy for a decade. The conclusion is surely that a diverse, decentralised system needs a systemic infrastructure to support it. The teaching schools reform promises to deliver just that.

Through it, the Covid recovery promises to be coordinated, collaborative and, above all, school-led.



# Reviews

## BOOK REVIEW



### Being 10% Braver

**Author:** Keziah Featherstone and Vivienne Porritt

**Publisher:** SAGE Publications Ltd

**Reviewer:** Khera Potts, teacher of RE, Blessed John Henry Newman RC College

The sleepless nights, the wardrobe re-assessment – hallmarks of a pending return to work following maternity. #WomenEd's *Being 10% Braver* arrived at the perfect time for me and I was hoping it would provide coping strategies to re-build my confidence as a leader and teacher.

In line with #WomenEd's values, this is effectively a community-sourced story book. Diverse female colleagues from across the education spectrum share their journeys through challenges such as returning to work after illness or maternity, undergoing the menopause or belonging to a group with a protected characteristic.

Much of it is very familiar, often sadly. Debra Rutley's honest account of living and teaching with depression is a case in point. Likewise, I suspect I'm not the only one who will smile ruefully at Rachael Paget's description of her first words after waking from a medically induced coma: "I never set cover!"

Essentially, the book charts how by being '10% braver' (perhaps best explained as the deliberate practice of confidence) the contributors were able to make positive changes to their professional lives. The case studies follow colleagues who have used their experiences to effect personal, cultural and structural change, such as flexible headship (Mitchell and Turner), establishing collaborative professionalism (Rankin) and becoming "the one who buys the chairs" (Goldsmith).

The design of the book itself makes it very readable. Each chapter takes

around ten minutes or so to read, so you can easily dip in and out. Each is bookended with a summary of key points and a "Passing on being 10% braver" box-out, so you are quickly able to see whether it is relevant to you how you might put it into practice. Particularly useful is the references section, which allows further learning about policy and law on specific issues.

Some chapters allow reflection on and awareness of others' perspectives, which may provide starting points for growing awareness and making change. Claire Neaves' well-researched chapter on authenticity as an LGBT+ leader and role model is a stand-out. It describes the complexities of being an LGBT+ teacher and having to skilfully navigate between challenging those who would believe it's no longer an issue and being inclusive of those who know it is and want to better support their colleagues and students. Likewise, Ruth Golding's chapter on leading with a disability offers practical ways to challenge assumptions, communicate and build confidence.

Seemingly absent are the experiences of women of colour – although they do contribute chapters on other themes. Penny Rabiger does challenge all of us to "make sure you're not the one blocking the view" in terms of diversity, reminding us that "you're

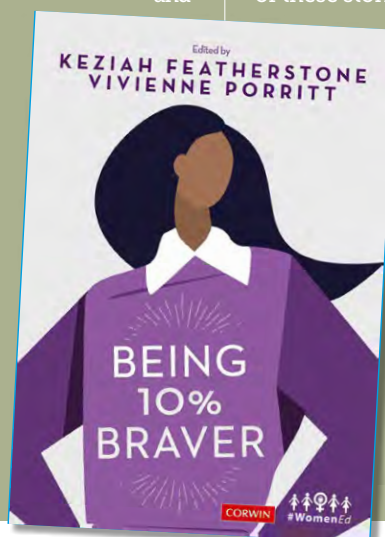
not an innocent bystander; you're a change agent with an opportunity and a responsibility". For me, the section of which her chapter is a part, "Tackling an Unfair System", was the most useful.

Perhaps it is a naive need to make sure I learn something from reading an educational book that means for me there was a missed opportunity here. In the final chapter, Vivienne Porritt reminds the reader of the responsibility of the #WomenEd community to change things so that future generations of female teachers and leaders do not face the same issues. Unfortunately, as the stories focused on the personal and professional, ways to challenge policy and systemic issues need to be sifted out where they appear.

What do I do if my context isn't as open to change as some of those I read about, or if I'm struggling to have conversations about what I'm experiencing? What chapter should I put under the nose of my willing but time-poor headteacher? Confidence is a thread that weaves many of these stories together, but what can I

do if I have none? How do I structure that? Yes there is a chapter on imposter syndrome – but what do I do about the factors that make this endemic in schools?

Still, the fact you are reading this – my first published piece of writing – means perhaps even just the call to be '10% braver' works, whatever that looks like.



# Reviews



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

@5Naureen

## Raising the profile of governance professionals serving schools

@ICSA\_News

In this blog for The Chartered Governance Institute, National Governance Association CEO, Emma Knights writes about her organisation's efforts to raise the profile of governance professionals. Clerks and governance professionals play a pivotal role in effective governance and the NGA is campaigning to raise school governance visibility and, in March, is focusing on governance professionals.

Knights talks about how the role has evolved, especially with the growth of multi-academy trusts. In medium and larger trusts, they lead governance support across the trust and have oversight of Local Governing Body clerks.

Knights lists the various ways governance professionals can help raise their profile. She would like them to talk about the difference their support makes to the governance of organisations. She would also like them to complete the NGA's clerks' survey, nominate someone for an award in their Outstanding Governance Awards and take part in the annual conference for clerks and governance professionals. This blog is great place to start to raise awareness of some the unsung heroes of schools' pandemic response.

## TOP BLOGS of the week



### Good Enough for Any SEF

@DavidNautilus1

As school leaders and as governors, we are very familiar with the Self Evaluation Form (SEF). We spend a lot of time seeking evidence to put into it to prove the worth of what we do. David Rushby argues for a different, 'softer' form of evidence, namely the way the school is viewed for its engagement with its local community.

Rushby notes that he relishes being the head of a school in a tough area and changing people's pre-conceptions. Your community, he says, will not judge you using inspection frameworks or statistical thresholds. Yet people talking favourably about your school is the most significant indication that what you are doing is working. Committing to our schools and communities in the effort to educate our children creates a virtuous cycle of improving reputation and outcomes.

There is no stronger argument for governors to routinely evaluate how we engage with our communities and what they think of our schools.

### The Kids Have Been Fantastic

@EnserMark

Amid apprehension about how children (and adults) would cope with the March 8 'reopening', Mark Enser and his wife, Zoe, reflected on their experience of the past week. Here, he notes their general sense of

elation and tiredness, then sets out his own observations. It makes for a very reassuring post.

Despite mixed messages, Enser notes that secondary school children have generally complied with the requirement to wear masks. Like his own school, most appear to have organised lateral flow testing with far less disruption than feared. And as far as lost learning is concerned, although they have not learnt as much as they would have in class, his students have learnt geography! Some have flourished, while a small number have, unsurprisingly, learnt very little. But by and large children have been bored at home and are happy to be back.

In an excellent counterpoint to some of the catastrophising and calls for systemic change, Enser concludes that schools just need the funding to provide bespoke support and then be left alone to get on with it.

### We #ChoosetoChallenge

@maternityCPD

The MTPT Project has used this year's International Women's Day theme, #ChoosetoChallenge to write a blog for diverse educators showing how some of their members have challenged stereotypes associated with parenthood.

Using examples from their community, they put the lie to the notions that a woman "leaves before she leaves" and loses all ambitions when she becomes a mother. The post covers a raft of sensitive topics, including open discussion about difficulties in conception and IVF and adoption journeys. Most saliently for school leaders, the case studies show that not all mothers need part-time jobs in order to balance home and work lives, that those who work flexible hours are as committed as their full-time colleagues and that the current model of parental leave may not be an inclusive one.

This is an important blog to stimulate governors to reflect on whether their schools make it easier for women to make choices.



# Research

UCL Institute of Education will review a new research development each half term. Contact them @IOE\_London if you have a topic you'd like them to explore

## Is a return to normality what Year 6 pupils need?

Alice Bradbury, associate professor, UCL Institute of Education

**W**hile the reopening of schools is a welcome return to normality for parents, it is also a welcome return to some kind of normality for most teachers. The exception are Year 6 teachers, who are returning to a spring and summer term like no other – one without the pressure of SATs.

As a former Year 6 teacher, I know from experience that this is the time of year when panic can set in, and every strategy gets deployed to help improve overall scores. But this year their cancellation presents a one-off chance to do something different, and to learn from this exceptional circumstance.

A key difference is the opportunity to avoid the dividing practices encouraged by SATs. A paper published with my colleagues Annette Braun and Laura Quick this week uses the term 'dividing practices' to discuss grouping by attainment and setting, groups for cusp or borderline children, and interventions, all done in preparation for these tests.

Based on extensive interviews with headteachers and a survey of 288 heads (pre-Covid), the paper examines how SATs encourage various grouping systems, despite the concerns raised by school leaders that these practices may be otherwise damaging to children's self-esteem. In other words, they don't want to do it, but they feel they have to because the tests are so important.

Headteachers told us about three particular practices that are of interest. First, the use of forms of grouping on a regular, organised basis, directly related to SATs. For example, many schools divided children into sets for English and Maths in the spring term of Year 6. Some also used sets throughout the school or even streamed pupils



into permanent class groups based on attainment. The survey data showed that 35 per cent of heads agreed with the statement "SATs mean we have to group pupils by ability in English", and 47 per cent agreed for Maths.

We also found complex versions of 'educational triage', a system of prioritisation where children are organised according to their potential to get 'age-related expectations' (ARE) or 'greater depth' (GD). Unlike previous versions of triage where there was only one set of borderline children, those on the cusp of ARE and GD were both the focus of booster groups. This 'double triage' system appeared to be a direct result of the inclusion of GD percentages in league tables.

Our research also revealed extensive use of interventions, whereby small groups of children were removed from assembly time, lunchtime or afternoon lessons in order to 'plug gaps' in their learning, based on SATs requirements.

This 'intervention culture' only applies to some children, but we argue it should be seen as another form of grouping, and as an additional dividing practice.

These practices may seem very

normal, but they are forms of classifying children, and organising them in a space or in a hierarchy, in ways research tells us can be damaging. Practices such as interventions are forms of exclusion – from assembly, or from non-core subjects – which have effects on children.

There was evident awareness of the problems associated with grouping, but these headteachers felt it was (as previously found in relation to younger children) a necessary evil. As one explained: "On a sort of moral level, I'm opposed to setting. Although that's exactly what I have in Year 6."

The question for this phase of recovery is whether the system has changed enough to shift the balance away from prioritising test results. We know that school leaders have prioritised children's welfare during the pandemic.

In this pre-pandemic research, one headteacher told us, "I'm only as good as the last set of my results." Now, headteachers have far more to worry about, not least the welfare and safety of their pupils and staff.

The prioritisation of care and wellbeing apparent during Covid times should be carried through to the post-pandemic period. This should include taking steps to reduce the use of dividing practices when SATs return.





# WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

## FRIDAY

"Not every day has been brilliant," a clearly jaded Gavin Williamson admitted during ASCL's virtual conference last week when asked about how his leadership during the pandemic had gone.

No doubt many heads would say this was the understatement of the year, but anger soon turned to despair as Williamson opened up further about his experiences.

He admitted to having been "lobbied" by his teaching assistant wife on issues "where maybe the Department for Education hasn't always got it perfect all the time, and it's always good to hear it from the frontline".

"Our pillow talk is maybe a little bit different," he added, causing more than 1,000 school leaders to cringe.

Williamson also revealed he had relied on his family's new puppy to get him through.

"One thing about pets is they always seem to be pleased to see you, especially dogs."



## MONDAY

The DfE allocated another £24 million to its breakfast clubs programme this week, extending the support on offer for another two years.

But the government's boast that almost 2,500 schools have been reached by the scheme since 2018 may well prove hollow, as it is not known how many of the clubs created are new.

The government was skewered by its opponents last year after *Schools Week* revealed that of the 1,800 clubs "created or improved" under the scheme as of early 2020, just 286 were actually new.

Many will also be scratching their heads over why ministers continue to keep the scheme in its pilot phase with such limited funding available. If it's so successful, why not roll it out nationally?

## THURSDAY

Reading headlines this week about calls from Labour for the government to extend free school meals vouchers into the Easter holidays, one could be forgiven for thinking we'd suddenly lurched a year into the past.

But given that learning from its mistakes isn't one of the government's fortes, it's hardly surprising we're all having the same debate as we were having in March last year.

Some things are different this time. According to attendance data, most pupils are now back at school, and ministers have allocated additional funding for councils to support hard-up families and to run holiday activities and food programmes.

However, as the DfE quietly acknowledged this week, it is inevitable some holiday clubs planned for the Easter break will be affected by Covid. Knowing

this, and knowing that its council grant doesn't guarantee free school meals provision in the same way the voucher scheme did, you would think ministers would have predicted the negative headlines and done something.

But we fear something else is different this time – the chances of a U-turn on this issue are much less likely.

\*\*\*

With heads furious about plans to publish exam boards' optional teacher assessment materials online, interim Ofqual chair Ian Bauckham was at great pains to defend the move when he addressed ASCL's (virtual) conference this week.

However, we suspect his claim that prepping for and memorising the contents of the materials could prove a "good learning experience" for pupils will do little to assuage concerns that the process could unfairly advantage privileged kids.

Another of Bauckham's interventions was slightly more helpful. He clarified that the evidence used in reaching grades would not be the subject of "negotiation" between teachers and students. This will no doubt have been a welcome clarification for heads worried about sharp-elbowed parents pressuring teachers.

But it still leads to questions about why everyone was talking about a negotiation in the first place.

It was only a few weeks ago that acting chief regulator Simon Lebus told the education committee there would be an "opportunity for a student to say if they think that the evidence that has been used does not accurately reflect the best of their ability".

No idea where the confusion could have come from...



# HEADTEACHER

Full Time, Permanent, Required for September 2021

Salary L17 - L 23

£62,570 - £72, 497

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

## We need from you

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

## We can offer you

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

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

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

Timeline				
<b>Closing date:</b>	Monday 12th April 2021 at 9am		<b>Tour dates:</b>	
<b>Shortlisting:</b>	Tuesday 13th April 2021		Wednesday 24th March 2021	
<b>Interview: Day 1</b>	Monday 19th April 2021		Thursday 25th March 2021	
<b>Interview: Day 2</b>	Tuesday 20th April 2021		Friday 26th March 2021	

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

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

For the Full Job Description and Application Form please visit

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



## Headteacher

Required for  
**September 2021**

**Salary Range:** L28 to L34

Following the promotion of the current postholder to Chief Executive Officer of Estuaries Multi Academy Trust, we are excited to be in a position to recruit a new Headteacher at Newton Abbot College.

Newton Abbot College is a mainstream, comprehensive, inclusive, large 11 – 19 academy within a three-academy trust. The partner schools in the trust are Dawlish College (a smaller 11 – 16 academy) and Starcross Primary (a small village primary academy).

Newton Abbot College became an academy in 2011 and, after 8 years as a very successful stand-alone academy, was a forming partner of the launch of a new MAT, Estuaries, in December 2019.

Details available on the College website [www.nacollege.devon.sch.uk](http://www.nacollege.devon.sch.uk). Only applications submitted on the College's online application form will be considered.

**Tel:** 01626 367335; **e-mail:** [hr@nacollge.devon.sch.uk](mailto:hr@nacollge.devon.sch.uk)

**Closing date:** 30 March 2021 at noon

**Interview date:** w/c 19 April 2021



Vacancy

## Director of Learning and Development

**Pay Range:**

L26-L31 (£76,141- £88,187)

**Contract:** Permanent, Full-time

**Start date:** 1st September 2021

The role of Director of Learning and Development is a hugely significant one for the Trust as this role will directly support the Executive Director of School Improvement to develop and implement the Trust's school improvement model and associated curriculum framework.

In addition to an impressive track record of school improvement, you will have superb leadership skills and the credibility to motivate and empower others. You will have a clear vision for how coordinated professional development at all levels can support the achievement of improvement in teaching quality and improved pupil outcomes across all Trust schools.

Contact **James Hill** (Executive Director of School Improvement) on **07725 984363** for informal conversation.

Information Pack can be downloaded from [www.drbignitemat.org](http://www.drbignitemat.org)

Email applications to [rhawkins@drbignitemat.org](mailto:rhawkins@drbignitemat.org)

**Closing Date:** Friday 16th April 2021

**Interviews:** TBC



**JOB TITLE:** HEAD OF SCHOOL

**LOCATION:** SHENSTONE SCHOOL

**SALARY / SALARY RANGE:** L19-L24

**CLOSING DATE:** 30/04/2021

**INTERVIEW DATE:** WEEK COMMENCING 17/05/2021

**START DATE:** 01/09/2021



**SHENSTONE SCHOOL**



As the Head of School you will work alongside the Executive Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team, Governing Board, TKAT Trust and staff to develop the shared vision and strategic plan, which serves to inspire and motivate pupils and all other members of the school community. You will lead on teaching and learning and help to ensure that we consistently offer an environment which enables each child to achieve their full potential through the provision of quality teaching and learning at our specialist school setting.

Shenstone School is a special school for pupils who have severe and/or complex learning difficulties within the London Borough of Bexley. Shenstone School is located on two sites, Sidcup (for younger pupils) and Crayford (for older pupils). We work hard to ensure that Shenstone is a safe, happy, welcoming and truly outstanding place for our pupils to thrive. Our school benefits

from impressive facilities across the two sites, enabling us to offer a wide range of opportunities and activities for learning both inside and outside the classroom.

For more information about the role please email [admin@shenstone-tkat.org](mailto:admin@shenstone-tkat.org)/phone the office on **0208 302 1743** and request a virtual meeting or COVID risk assessed face to face meeting with the Executive Head Teacher.

### Professional qualifications required –

- Is a qualified teacher with QTS
- Experience of senior leadership in a school (NPQSL/ NPQH)
- Evidence of relevant CPD
- **Experience in a special school setting is essential**





For further information and to apply please visit  
<https://careers.cranmereducationtrust.com/vacancies>

## Strategic Director of Teacher Training and Development

GBP £62,570 - £69,031 per year

We want to appoint a knowledgeable, skilled and experienced professional to lead both our Initial Teacher Training arm, Manchester Nexus, and the Teaching Hub for Oldham and Tameside, based at The Blue Coat School, Oldham.

S/he will be committed to driving and shaping the quality of teacher training and professional development to achieve the best provision for children and young people, and will be steeped in the curricula for initial and early career development, with significant experience and understanding of the development of NPQs.

S/he will be a strategic thinker and planner, able to inspire and empower others through a clear and compelling vision for developing the profession, and an effective manager and communicator who can operationalise the planning, working collaboratively and astutely with colleagues across the region and the system.

This post is subject to an enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service check.

**Closing date for applications:** 9am, 14th April 2021

**Interview date:** 22nd and 23rd April 2021



## 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](mailto:S.McNeill@theredhillacademy.org.uk)

**Closing date:** 12 noon Monday 22nd March

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### Our Vision

Camden is a place where everyone has a chance to thrive and where nobody gets left behind.

# CPD Support Officer Camden Learning £30,000 circa

Camden Learning is a local education partnership established in 2017 and jointly owned by and Camden's schools and Camden Council. It was created for the benefit of all our children and schools, with a core focus on school improvement.

We have made good progress in building Camden Learning and developing greater capacity locally for a school-led system. We have a strong relationship with schools and have worked closely with leaders to put the architecture in place to provide stronger and more creative connections between them. Working with and through our school members, Camden Learning has made significant progress and all Camden's schools are currently graded Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

We are looking to appoint a CPD Support Officer to support the delivery of Camden Learning's continuous professional development (CPD) offer to Camden's schools and other customers and stakeholders. The post holder will proactively assist with the implementation, planning and delivery of the Camden Learning CPD offer.

The role will require contributing fully to service improvements and developments, policy and best practice, and support quality assurance processes for the CPD offer. The successful applicant will work collaboratively with the Managing Director, all members of the Business Development Team, School Improvement Team, STEAM and Partnerships Team, Camden's schools, Camden Council's school facing

teams, and all other stakeholders. We are a small organisation so would expect the CPD Support Officer to work flexibly and proactively within our team.

We are looking for someone with the ability to operate independently, making decisions and judgements in the context of a complex school's landscape, generating innovative ideas and practical solutions for service initiatives, improvement, and partnership opportunities. To make a success in the role you should have effective personal management skills, acting proactively, flexibly, and constructively, bringing energy and focus to the work of the team.

Our member schools are committed to working together for the good of all Camden children and young people, and Camden Learning is the glue that binds them together locally. They have a strong sense of belonging and pride in Camden and its communities, and you would enjoy working with them.

For further details of the role or to discuss any aspect of the job opportunity please contact Camden learning via [customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk](mailto:customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk)

The closing date for submission of applications will be **Wednesday 31st March**. To apply, please send your CV accompanied by a statement of application which should be no more than two pages of A4. Please send to [customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk](mailto:customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk)

This role will be subject to an enhanced DBS check





# Chief Finance and Business Officer

An exciting opportunity has arisen to join our successful and ambitious Trust, due to retirement of the current postholder following a long and successful career. We would like to recruit an outstanding individual who can share the Trust's ambition and aspirations. The successful candidate will ideally know how schools operate and will have the ability to further develop the financial systems across the Trust, working closely with the Executive Team to support the operational and strategic objectives of Connect.

Reporting to the CEO, the CFBO is responsible for overseeing the successful and highly effective delivery of financial and business management across the Trust, leading a highly efficient service. In addition, the CFBO will help shape the strategic development of the Trust and add value at the Trust board level. The post-holder will play a leading role operationally across the organisation and manage all commercial decision making and third-party negotiations, delivering high quality outcomes. Ideally, you will have also managed financial and business strategies, as well as experience of leading a team in a fast-paced environment.

Working alongside senior leaders, you will ideally be ACCA/CCAB/AAT4 qualified, although this is not essential and have experience of working with school/Trust budgets. In addition, you will take a keen interest in the financial viability of projects and advising as necessary to all levels of leadership and Trustees. If you are a solution focussed, ambitious person, who likes the mix of both hands on and strategic challenges, then this could be the role for you. The key priority is to find the right person for the post who will help shape the future direction of the Trust.

## The CFBO role includes:

- Exciting opportunity to support the development of the central structure and systems
- Overseeing all financial management and reporting
- Overseeing HR, Estates Management, Health and Safety and other Trust Business
- Completing all DfE and ESFA returns on time
- Working closely with the Trustees, CEO, Trust ELT and Trust SLT

Salary Range £43857 - £54956, depending on experience, skills and qualifications. This is a full time, permanent position, based at Leigham Primary School, although frequent visits to other schools and meetings will be required.

If this sounds like a position you could thrive in, then we would love to hear from you! If you are keen to find out more, then please contact us via [admin@connectacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:admin@connectacademytrust.co.uk) to arrange for an informal discussion and hopefully the opportunity to look around our schools, bearing in mind the current national lockdown we are in.

The deadline for applications is **Monday 19th April (midday)** with interviews planned for Tuesday 27/4/21, to be confirmed. All applications must be submitted using the Connect application form that is available here, and emailed to [admin@connectacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:admin@connectacademytrust.co.uk). CVs or similar will not be considered. Anticipated start date: June to September 2021, depending on experience and availability. Actual start date and induction programme to be agreed.

*Connect is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The successful applicant will be required to undertake an enhanced DBS criminal record check.*



# THE FLAGSHIP NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE FOR EMPLOYERS & PROVIDERS

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### 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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