



Recovery adviser
reveals reform
agenda



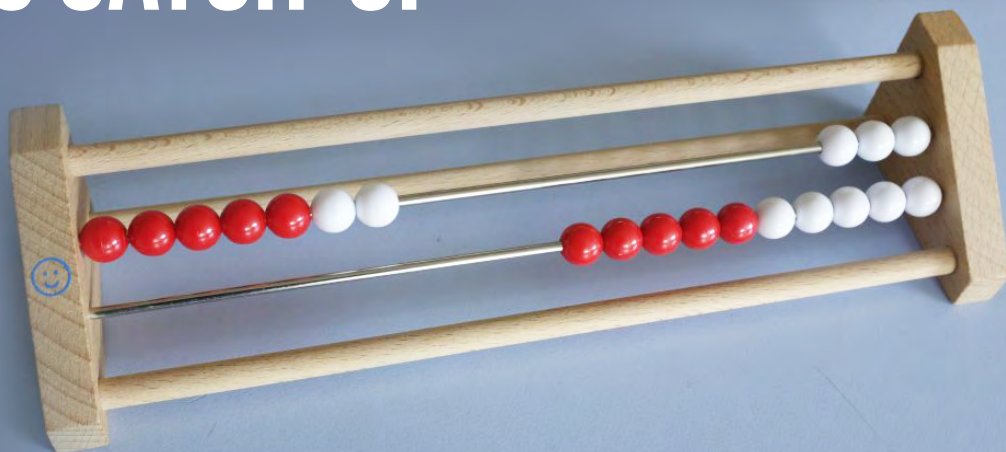
Stretched
Ofsted gets
MORE power



The school
breaking vaccine
records



DFE COUNTING ON ABACUS FOR MATHS CATCH-UP



PAGE 13

Oak scramble to secure future as privatisation plan pulled

- Management tabled share plan which could've made staff millions
- Charity model now chosen for online school as DfE cash nears end
- But alarm after £15 million catch-up tender suddenly withdrawn

JOHN DICKENS | @JOHNDICKENSSW

EXCLUSIVE PAGES 4-5



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Meet the news team



John Dickens
EDITOR

@JOHNDICKENSSW
JOHN.DICKENS@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



JL Dutaut
COMMISSIONING
EDITOR

@DUTAUT
JEAN-LOUISDUTAUT@LSECT.COM



Jess Staufenberg
COMMISSIONING
EDITOR

@STAUFENBERGJ
JESS.STAUFE NBERG@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Freddie Whittaker
CHIEF REPORTER

@FCDWHITTAKER
FREDDIE.WHITTAKER@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Samantha Booth
SENIOR REPORTER

@SAMANTHAJBOTH
SAMANTHA.BOOTH@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



James Carr
SENIOR REPORTER

@JAMESCARR_93
JAMES.CARR@LSECT.COM



Tom Belger
SENIOR REPORTER

@TOM_BELGER
TOM.BELGER@SCHOOLS WEEK.CO.UK



Nicky Phillips
HEAD DESIGNER

@GELVETICA
NICKY.PHILLIPS@FEWEEK.CO.UK



Shane Mann
MANAGING DIRECTOR

@SHANERMANN
SHANE.MANN@LSECT.COM

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

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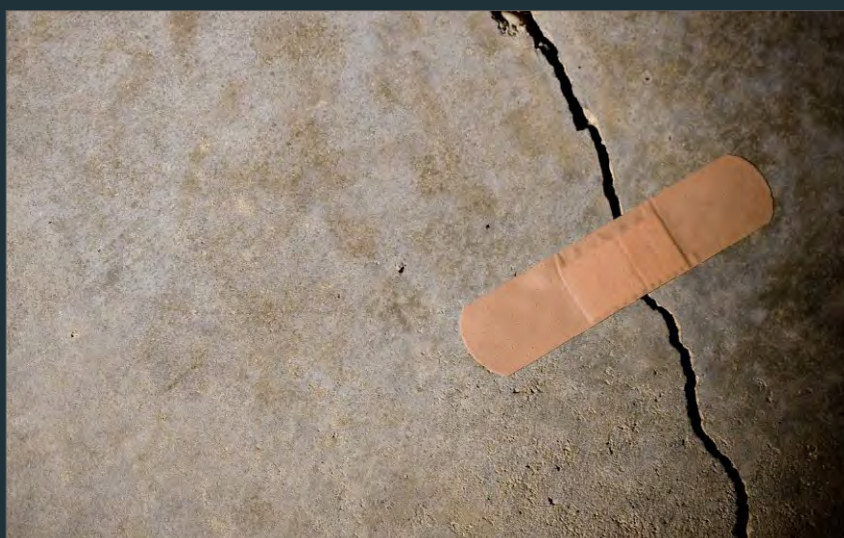


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A wellbeing charter can't paper over the cracks

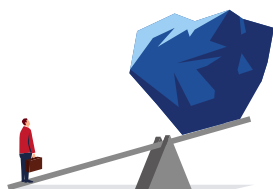


Page 25



Friends with benefits: the potential of MAT peer reviews

Page 26



The levelling-up let-down

Page 6



What factors make SEND inclusion a success for all?

Page 30

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Investigation

Revealed: the struggle to secure Oak Academy's future

JOHN DICKENS

@JOHNDICKENSSW

EXCLUSIVE

Oak National Academy's future set-up has still to be finalised just weeks before government funding runs out – after a privatisation plan, by which employees could have made millions, was pulled.

A *Schools Week* investigation has established Oak management tabled a proposal whereby they would become majority shareholders of a "social purpose company" to run the online school.

The plan also outlined selling off the firm after a few years, with tens of millions of pounds to be returned to employees.

A private firm called Sapling Education Limited had been established in March by an Oak director. Oak had been investigating solutions for its future since October.

However, after being submitted to the Reach Foundation, the charity that incubated Oak, the controversial plans were pulled that same month.

Both Oak and Reach said the proposals were not "workable". Oak said it looked at dozens of options, including public and charitable operations. The proposal was part of a "rolling, discursive process", they added.

Late last month, Reach set up an independent charity to run Oak. However, there is still no finalised plan to secure "sustainable" long-term funding.

Future plans have been derailed after the government pulled a £15 million contract for catch-up resources for which Oak was going to bid.

A £4.3 million Department for Education grant to provide free online lessons runs out at the end of this academic year.

All options posed 'significant challenges'

The Oak management team was asked by Reach to come up with plans to "secure



"It remains our priority that Oak National Academy remains open and free to use by teachers and pupils"

a sustainable future for Oak National Academy so it remains open and free for schools, teachers and pupils".

They were told to consider all options for its future, an Oak spokesperson said.

Others plans considered included public and charitable organisations. But an Oak spokesperson said all the options have "significant challenges" as "even the most basic version of Oak" costs more than £1 million a year to run.

Oak has been awarded nearly £5 million to operate since being rapidly set up at the height of the first lockdown last year. The cash was awarded without a tender because it was part of the pandemic response.

Scores of teachers also gave their time for free to record lessons, with schools and trusts providing resources without charge in its early days.

Oak now has over 10,000 free video lessons and resources and delivered its 100

millionth free lesson in February.

The management team submitted its private firm plan for consideration to the Reach board five months into its investigations.

Under the proposal, *Schools Week* understands Oak management was listed as majority shareholders.

However, an Oak spokesperson said "there was no option in which the management team would have had a majority share".

All employees would own shares, the spokesperson added. Oak has around 25 staff.

The plan proposed securing outside investment for the company, before selling it after a few years – with employee shareholders in line to make tens of millions of pounds.

The rest of the company would be owned by a charitable trust that would hold Oak's assets. The trust would have had "preference

Investigation

shares" which "effectively 'locks away' and protects the value created by Oak during the pandemic".

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said Oak is "effectively a national resource and it is obviously essential that care is taken in any discussion of its future to ensure that any financial arrangements which are proposed are appropriate and that there is complete transparency".

Social purpose company 'appeared to protect Oak mission'

An Oak spokesperson said becoming a social purpose company "appeared to protect the mission of Oak whilst giving it the ability to secure the social investment we needed to continue our work".

The Sapling firm was set up on March 16. Its company director is listed as Emma Beatty, Oak's operations director.

Schools Week was told the company was established to "keep options open" for the "social purpose companies that were being considered".

But Oak said that "once we had understood the models in detail and their implications, everyone agreed that this wasn't the case and so all 'social purpose company' options were discarded in favour of a charitable model".

The proposal had been submitted to Reach for consideration at a March board meeting, but was pulled before trustees met.

Ed Vainker, chief executive of the Reach Foundation, said this was because "everyone agreed that it was not workable".

The plan was "summarised as part of the board discussions", he said.

Vainker also added that "many options were developed and discounted" as part of the project since October.

Ditched tender poses questions for future funding

Despite the Reach board deciding in March that Oak would become a charity, it wasn't until April 27 that The Oak National Academy was set up by Vainker.

"It is obviously essential care is taken in any discussion of Oak's future to ensure financial arrangements proposed are appropriate"

It is listed on Companies House as a private limited company by guarantee, which is the usual set-up for a not-for-profit organisation requiring its own legal identity, such as a charity.

Vainker said they "hope" the charity can take Oak forward, but admitted "options for a sustainable future for Oak" are still being "explored".

The issue has been complicated after the Department for Education last week pulled a £15 million contract to produce free in-class catch-up resources. The contract was due to start in July.



Ed Vainker

The British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) had challenged the DfE, saying the tight tender timescale may "potentially discriminate or prohibit" bidders.

The tender was launched on April 1 but was pulled on May 12, the day it was due to close. The DfE said it was "working on a longer-term strategy to support education recovery".

Schools Week has been told that Oak planned to bid for the contract – leaving funding plans now uncertain.

But an Oak spokesperson said while they are "still working on how the new charity will work and be funded", they "hope to be able to make an announcement soon".

"It remains our priority that Oak National Academy remains open and free to use by teachers and pupils," Oak added.

The DfE did not respond to questions about whether it had been involved in discussions over Oak's future. A department spokesperson said, "No decisions have been made about future funding."

DfE ringfences funding to boost trust expansion

FREDDIE WHITTAKER

@FCDWHITTAKER

Almost a fifth of funding to encourage academy trusts to expand this year will be ringfenced for four areas of England as part of the government's "levelling up" agenda.

But the Department for Education will not reveal its selection criteria for the areas, simply saying that they had a low proportion of pupils attending 'good' or 'outstanding' schools, and were identified by regional schools commissioners as having "high potential for rapid improvement".

The government announced this week that £5 million from the £24 million trust capacity fund will only be available to chains that agree to take on schools in Plymouth, Ashfield and Mansfield, south Sefton and north Liverpool, and north Durham and City.

The ringfenced funding forms part of a £10 million pledge from Boris Johnson this week to improve teaching quality in the four areas.

However, none of it is new money. The other £5 million incomes from other DfE budgets, and will be spent on existing school improvement programmes.

Ministers were this week accused of "creative accounting" after a study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that about a third of the £4.3 billion of education spending in response to Covid will be taken from existing budgets or underspends in other areas.



Boris Johnson

Dr Mary Bousted, from the National Education Union, said the research "exposes another example of the gap between government rhetoric about investing in education recovery and the reality".

This year's trust capacity fund has two "strands". Under strand A, trusts can get up to £310,000 to take on schools in 118 areas, while strand B offers up to £100,000 for schools elsewhere in the country.

However, priority in both strands will be given to any bids to take on schools in the four priority areas.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said he was "encouraging all school trusts" to consider applying for funding "to expand and support more schools, particularly in those areas of the country where there are still too few opportunities for children to attend a great school".

The government's opportunity areas

programme will also be extended, with £18 million in additional funding.

Under the scheme, 12 areas deemed to be social mobility "cold spots" receive extra funding to improve educational outcomes and job opportunities.

The 12 are Blackpool, Bradford, Derby, Doncaster, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich, Norwich, North Yorkshire Coast, Oldham, Stoke-on-Trent and West Somerset.

In 2019 MPs cast doubts on the effectiveness of the programme. But ministers have since announced that they are considering wider rollouts of schemes piloted in the opportunity areas.

The latest boost takes the total funding for opportunity areas to £108 million. Most goes directly to the areas, but the DfE said £2.5 million this year would be used to support "twinning" with other areas, and evaluation of the programme.

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said he was frustrated by "piecemeal announcements being portrayed as though they are a grand vision".

"Where is the big plan ... that delivers on the government's rhetoric about 'levelling up' opportunities for all?

"It wasn't in the Queen's Speech, and it isn't in this announcement. The prime minister needs to set out a truly ambitious plan – and the Treasury needs to fund it."

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

First 7 faith trusts named to drive academy 'vision'

The government has named the first seven faith school trusts it is funding to help drive its academy "vision".

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, last month announced plans for a diocesan trust pilot - with a host of new policies - to get more schools to become academies.

The pilot was established with the Church of England and Catholic church.

The Department for Education said last month it would provide £800,000 in set-up funding to support nine new trusts.

The seven named this week include five Catholic trusts and two CofE. Two more are yet to be named.

Church schools not taking part in the pilot

can still join or set up a trust, but the DfE advised that they speak to their diocese and regional schools commissioner first.

The government also revealed this week a separate £1.25 million "turnaround" Catholic trust for the south Sefton and north Liverpool areas.

Williamson had previously said the DfE would work with the Catholic Education Service to establish the North West Catholic Dioceses MAT to "specifically support Catholic schools in need of intensive support". The trust would act as a "temporary home" for inadequate Catholic schools.

The specific areas which would be involved were previously unknown

New faith trusts: The full list

The Diocese of Worcester: Elements Diocesan Learning Trust (CofE)

The Diocese of Lincoln: St Lawrence Academy (CofE)

The Diocese of Clifton: The Cardinal Newman Catholic Educational Trust (Catholic)

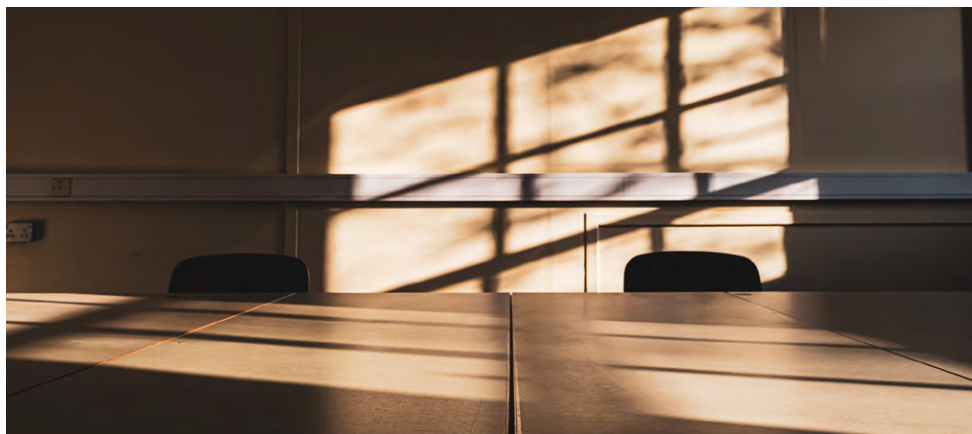
The Diocese of Clifton: The Dunstan Catholic Educational Trust (Catholic)

The Archdiocese of Birmingham: Our Lady and All Saints Catholic Multi-Academy Company (Catholic)

The Diocese of Lancaster: Mater Christi Multi Academy Trust (Catholic)

The Archdiocese of Southwark: South East London Catholic Academy Trust (Catholic)

News



Crackdown on illegal schools falters

TOM BELGER
@TOM_BELGER

The government has been accused of “unacceptable” delays to its crackdown on illegal schools, as new figures show tip-offs to Ofsted now average 12 a month.

The inspectorate wants ministers to act “swiftly” on promised reforms, while safeguarding chiefs and campaigners say agencies will still have inadequate powers to inspect and close sites.

A *Schools Week* analysis of Ofsted data shows it has investigated 123 sites over the past year, with more referrals between August and March than in the previous six months. The rise follows fears of a Covid-fuelled boom in home education encouraging the growth of illegal schools.

Even officials in Hackney, which has used planning rules and other “lawfully audacious” tactics to tackle sites, admit their clampdown is not working. Two sites were found in the east London borough in April alone.

A Department for Education spokesperson said it was committed to ensuring anyone running an unregistered school faced “the full force of the law”.

But there have been only four prosecutions. Eleven warning notices were issued over the past year, and 106 since Ofsted’s dedicated taskforce was launched in 2016, although there have been 857 reports.

While some may reference known sites or be inaccurate, agencies say their hands are tied by legal loopholes and limited powers.

Proposals to stop allowing sites to avoid registration were promised three years ago, but a consultation only closed in November.

And it is two years since a consultation closed on a register of children missing from education.

The DfE declined to say when either reform would be confirmed, promising action “in due course”.

An Ofsted spokesperson said it understood the government was committed to reform, but hoped it would happen “swiftly”.

Jim Gamble, an independent child safeguarding commissioner for the City of

London and Hackney, said the delays were “unacceptable”, warning that local agencies lacked the powers to visit and to check on the safety of premises and staff recruitment and vetting. They also could not shut unsafe sites.

Sir Alan Wood, who has led multiple government safeguarding reviews, said a rise in home education during Covid may have encouraged unregistered providers to “try and expand their activity”.

He said councils and other safeguarding bodies should be given the responsibility and power to check on unregistered settings.

Ofsted also lacks the powers to seize evidence or close schools after successful prosecutions – something that Dr Ruth Wareham, the education campaigns manager at Humanists UK, said it needed “as a matter of urgency”.

In 2016 her organisation told the Charity Commission of its concerns about scripture-based education at unregistered sites in Hackney’s Orthodox Charedi Jewish community.

Humanists UK claimed at the time the education left pupils with limited English and “ignorant and unprepared” for the outside world.

The commission said it had “carefully assessed” concerns, but not investigated the sites. A spokesperson said it was “not responsible for regulating schools”, suggesting the DfE or Ofsted would need to find breaches of education law before potential charity governance issues could be investigated.

The DfE did not respond when asked about the sites. It is understood Ofsted was also unable to act in most cases because sites providing a narrow curriculum are not deemed schools, a loophole delayed reforms are intended to fix.

Gamble said Hackney safeguarding chiefs’ own repeated efforts to engage charities running unregistered sites had failed, despite their legal duty to co-operate.

Officials have resorted to “lawfully audacious tactics” targeting some Hackney settings, using fire, safety or planning regulations. But he called it “untenable” as groups often moved.

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Institute trainees’ start date postponed

FREDDIE WHITTAKER
@FCDWHITTAKER

The government has been accused of “hyperbole and naivety” after it was forced to delay the start date for the first trainees at the Institute of Teaching.

The Department for Education hoped the £121 million, six-year contract for the “world-leading” Institute would deliver a small “pilot” of initial teacher training (ITT) from September next year. Delivery would be expanded to 500 trainees in 2023.

However, contract documents have now been amended to say that the Institute of Teaching (IoT) “will commence delivery of ITT cohorts from September 2023”. Delivery of the early career framework (ECF) and national professional qualifications (NPQs) will still begin in 2022.

The DfE said the change to the institute’s contract, which has not yet been awarded, was made following market feedback about delivery timescales.

Professor David Spendlove, from the University of Manchester, blamed a “combination of hyperbole and naivety in thinking you can set up a ‘flagship’ institute from scratch in the initial timescales suggested”.

“Whilst the narrative around ‘world-leading’ may be seemingly persuasive, it simply doesn’t stand up to scrutiny.”

The successful provider or consortium of providers must establish a legal entity and register with the Office for Students to get degree-awarding powers. Without the delay, this would have had to be done within months of the contract’s award.

Emma Hollis, from the National Association of School-Based Initial Teacher Trainers, said a 2022 pilot was “always going to be exceptionally ambitious”, given recruitment for those programmes would start in October this year.

She said the delay was “positive” and represented an “understanding by government that, in order to achieve quality in ITT, change needs to be done at a sensible pace”.

Schools Week understands the total funding available remains unchanged, but the DfE said it expected to spend less than the £121 million allocated.

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Watchdog eyes stretching inspection window to seven years

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

Ofsted may temporarily extend its statutory inspection window by two years to ensure Covid disruption doesn't result in a breach of its legal obligations.

At present the watchdog must inspect schools within five years of the end of the academic year in which its previous inspection took place.

But routine inspections have been on hold since the pandemic struck in March last year, creating a backlog of schools awaiting a visit.

The statutory clock was suspended during the pandemic. An Ofsted spokesperson said it continued to discuss "the terms under which it will restart" with the Department for Education.

There has been no formal consultation, but *Schools Week* understands the inspectorate has met with organisations that represent teachers and leaders to discuss an extension.

The length of the extension is also to be officially set, but sources familiar with the discussions expect it to be two years. This would leave some schools up to seven years



without an inspection.

However, sources told *Schools Week* that a formal agreement between the DfE and Ofsted has yet to be reached.

Any extension would be temporary as Ofsted tackles the backlog created by the pandemic.

Since January, monitoring inspections have checked whether schools have been taking effective action to provide education during the pandemic.

Full, graded inspections are set to resume in September.

While the statutory window for inspections is five years, Ofsted normally aims to revisit schools sooner.

Schools judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' must be inspected every four years - the exemption for 'outstanding' schools was dropped last year.

But the DfE has given Ofsted more time for visiting 'outstanding' schools. They must now receive an initial full inspection or short inspection within six years.

Analysis by *Schools Week* last year found about 4,000 state schools may have missed inspections between the first lockdown and January.

A school judged 'requires improvement' is usually inspected within 30 months, as are those judged 'inadequate'.

Stephen Chamberlain, the chief executive of The Active Learning Trust (ALT), said it "seems sensible" to allow a temporary extension to ensure that legal obligations are met.

However, he acknowledged that ALT was keen for some of its schools to be inspected so they could "demonstrate the improvements that have been made towards good and better outcomes".

Other trusts would be in a similar position.

JAMES CARR | @JAMESCARR_93

Ofsted to become 'quality assurance body' for online schools

Ofsted will step in to inspect online schools as part of a new accreditation scheme after the government failed to find a commercial provider to do the job.

An online school accreditation scheme was approved last year following a consultation on plans for online providers to volunteer for inspection against measures similar to the independent school standards.

The scheme aims to provide assurances on the quality of education and safeguarding provision.

Ofsted's estimate memorandum for the next academic year, which sets out the watchdog's planned spending, revealed it will become the "quality assurance body" for the scheme.

The scheme was supposed to launch last September, but *Schools Week* understands the launch was delayed because the DfE could not find a quality assurance partner via a commercial process.

It comes amid fears over a growing number of online schools in England. The DfE said there were more than 20 full-time online providers.

While these offer a full curriculum and represent a child's main source of education, they are currently unregulated.

Ofsted said the Department for Education was "looking at how children, parents and local authorities can be assured of the quality of education and appropriate safeguarding arrangements through an online schools accreditation scheme".

Schools Week understands the scheme is due to be launched this September, a year later than originally planned.

The government is set to provide funding in 2021-22 to cover Ofsted's costs for "developing and implementing the inspection framework" for online schools. However, it is not yet known how much money has been provided.

Under the scheme, online schools that are

inspected by Ofsted and meet the grade will become accredited providers.

The scheme is only applicable to providers operating "online-only on a permanent basis", the DfE said, and would not include any schools delivering remote education because of the pandemic.

The inspections would take place every two to four years and reports would be published online.

The memorandum also revealed that Ofsted's budget is set to increase by £2.5 million.

This includes a £1.5 million funding injection to support the watchdog inspecting and investigating unregistered schools.

This was previously part of the DfE's budget with Ofsted invoicing the government for the cost of undertaking the work.

A further £800,000 will be provided to fund investigations and inspections of unregistered children's social care providers.

News

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School at heart of Covid surge 'breaks vaccine record'

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

A school at the centre of Bolton's fight against the Indian Covid variant estimates more than 10,000 people have now been vaccinated on its site.

Essa Academy volunteered to become a vaccination centre after a surge in cases in the town, with the BL3 and BL4 postcodes particularly hard-hit.

On Sunday, 3,072 people received their jab at Essa, which the school believes is the highest total for a single vaccination site in one day. The NHS said it could not verify the claim.

Data from Public Health England shows that Lever Edge, where the school is situated in BL3, has a Covid infection rate almost 50 times higher than the national average.

In the week to May 13, there were 1,032 cases per 100,000 people, while the national average is just 21. About 300 Essa students are currently self-isolating, including all of year 7.

Martin Knowles, Essa's head, said the school was determined to help and contacted Bolton Council to offer its premises.

"It's a moment in time. The way to beat the virus is to vaccinate people. The more we can vaccinate, the safer the community will become."

Following conversations with Bolton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the local NHS trust and council, the town's mobile vaccination bus and pop-up vaccination tents were sent to the school with 42 vaccinators.

St John Ambulance is also on site.

The bus, which arrived on May 10, will stay until Sunday evening. The CCG confirmed that about 6,000 people were vaccinated over the weekend.

Knowles said that more than 10,000 people have been vaccinated so far. It was "wonderful" to see the community coming together.

The current pressures meant there was a "real moral side of leadership at the moment" and the more the school could do



Thousands of people from the local area have visited the school to get vaccinated



Headteacher Martin Knowles gets ready to hand out refreshments to those in line

to help, the better.

"The community has been hit very hard. A lot of pupils have lost parents to Covid and economically it's been hard around here."

The school has provided free lunches for vaccination staff, while school employees, including Knowles, have handed out cookies and drinks to those waiting in line.

"I came on Sunday just as a volunteer, it was just one of those moments in your career. I went up into the school to look down on the site. I'm not ashamed to say it - I was crying. It was truly a moment I won't forget."

While the government on Monday lifted its recommendation for masks to be worn in classrooms and communal areas, Essa



The school has provided free lunch for vaccination staff

will continue to keep the measures in place until at least half term.

Last month the school reintroduced lateral flow device (LFD) testing on-site after a dip in pupil home-testing. The measure was introduced before the surge in local Covid cases, but Knowles said it provided an extra level of assurance.

He said all 1,000 pupils were tested each Monday morning. Year 11 was tested in form time so learning was not disrupted.

A polymerase chain reaction (PCR) surge testing site also has been set up for staff and pupils.

"We're hitting it from every angle possible," Knowles said. All staff who wanted a vaccine had now received one.

Revealed: Covid expenses the DfE rejected

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

Covid could leave a lasting "black hole" in school budgets, experts have warned as new figures lay bare the pandemic's financial toll.

Official figures show schools made thousands of pleas for Covid expenses at the invitation of the Department for Education - which then decided not to reimburse them.

Requests included 250 claims totalling £475,691 for food for children and families, and more than 2,000 claims for PPE worth £2.16 million - or £1,044 per school.

Schools have received £138 million from the government's exceptional Covid costs fund.

But other claims worth £42 million were rejected, after already strict criteria were tightened after the deadline.

Claims were restricted to holiday opening costs, certain free school meals and extra cleaning costs, but only after Covid cases.

The DfE provided a breakdown of the £42 million it could not "fairly" reimburse after a freedom of information request.

It reveals 50 Covid expenses, from software to trauma training to legal advice (see graphic).

Most claims were for cleaning and other costs associated with safe reopening. Bids from 3,797 schools for £9.48 million were rejected.

Supply staffing was another major cost, with 1,452 schools claiming £7.72 million, or £5,312 each.

Dr Mary Bousted, the joint general secretary of the National Education Union, said dismissing such claims was a "mystery".

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said schools were forced to instead use budgets "not designed for delivering education during a pandemic".

He said he feared the financial "black hole" will have mushroomed as claims were only allowed for March to July.

Schools in surplus could not claim, including Newman RC College in Oldham.

Glyn Potts, the school's head, called the restriction "harsh" as his school was saving for new SEND facilities, and supply staff cost £51,530 in the first half of the autumn term alone.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the



National Association of Head Teachers, said schools had been "battered" by plummeting rentals and lettings, with 650 schools claiming £9,247 each on average for lost income

Peter Kyle, Labour's new shadow schools minister, said the restrictions followed a decade-long funding squeeze and "stealth" pupil premium cuts.

Leora Cruddas, the chief executive of the Confederation of School Trusts, said the

restrictive rules left schools with ongoing "financial burdens", while Bobbie Mills, an Education Policy Institute researcher, warned it could fuel long-term "deterioration" in their financial health.

Officials said claims outside limited categories were never guaranteed, however, and schools received cash through existing budgets and separate free school meal and workforce funds for costs throughout the year.

IN NUMBERS: THE COVID COSTS DfE WON'T PAY BACK

50

TYPES OF COVID EXPENSES
SCHOOLS INCURRED

£205k

TRANSPORT FOR SEND,
VULNERABLE AND KEY
WORKERS' CHILDREN

2,073

SCHOOLS CLAIMED FOR
PPE, TOTALLING £2.16M

£476k

FOOD FOR
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

£1,875

AVERAGE COST OF
TRAUMA TRAINING
CLAIMED BY 12 SCHOOLS

£11.4m

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News



Special school wants more help from LA

JAMES CARR

@JAMESCARR_93

EXCLUSIVE

Leaders at a special school judged ineffective during the pandemic have been left "frustrated" by a lack of support from their local authority ahead of the school's closure, an Ofsted report has found.

Hunters Hill College, in Bromsgrove, is one of only a handful of schools found by the watchdog to not be supporting children effectively in the "current circumstances".

The judgment followed a monitoring inspection in March, which also found safeguarding was ineffective.

Birmingham City Council's cabinet has approved the school's closure at the end of this academic year, after falling pupil numbers and rising repair costs made the site financially unviable.

The secondary school has capacity for 135, but took on no year 7 pupils last September. By January this year, it had 83 pupils, which has now fallen to 67.

A cabinet report said that bringing all buildings to a basic, warm dry standard would cost about £5 million. But this would "not provide value for money and would not provide a suitable building for the needs of the children".

"Serious building defects" closed the school for 40 per cent of the autumn term and pupils were taught remotely.

Many staff have not been replaced because of the imminent closure, while an interim executive board (IEB) took over governance in February.

All of the school's pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, and Ofsted said leaders had put "considerable effort" into ensuring plans were updated ahead of their change of placement.

But "delays with Birmingham local authority

mean that pupils have still not had the revisions made".

"Leaders' time is being consumed in trying to get the local authority to take action."

Ofsted also found the IEB was "frustrated by the lack of effective action from the local authority and other agencies to support the school".

The council said all pupils had been offered an interim or permanent placement. Those who did not accept an offer would move to home tuition.

It said it had met with the IEB and school leaders weekly and had a "project board" in place.

A spokesperson said: "These mechanisms ensure direct support from the LA is provided in respect of placement and the necessary review and amendment of EHC plans."

Ofsted also criticised the quality of work set at the school and noted pupils' lack of interest "stems from some teachers' low expectations and failure to set work that is well matched to needs".

Since 2016, Ofsted has conducted 116 local area SEND inspections with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to assess provision available for those with special educational needs and disabilities.

It found "significant weaknesses" at more than half of inspections.

Ofsted is set to revisit Birmingham City Council next week to monitor "how the local area has responded to the significant weaknesses" identified in June 2018.

Adam Boddison, the chief executive of the National Association for Special Educational Needs, said the volume of local authorities identified "suggests the problem is in part with the way in which the system is working".

"There needs to be an appropriate balance of funding, expectation and accountability if we want LAs to be successful in putting effective provision in place."

Shake-up forces DfE to list its priorities

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

The Department for Education is set to confirm its new "levelling-up" targets and performance measures, as the Treasury and Cabinet Office tighten their grip on departments in a Whitehall shake-up.

A new "outcome delivery plan" that sets out the department's overall agenda is expected to be published as early as next week.

Every department was ordered to draft its own priorities and performance metrics for the 2020 spending review.

Departments now have to show how spending proposals met these priorities, as well as report regularly on progress.

DfE documents shared with the education select committee this week confirm its latest "provisional" goals and metrics.

All four DfE objectives have faced seemingly minor tweaks to meet the government's wider agenda and align them with other departments.

A previous commitment to "high-quality education" becomes a pledge to "level-up education standards".

Metrics include PISA scores, phonics screening check outcomes, primary reading, writing and maths standards, and level 3 attainment and GCSE pass rates in English and maths by age 19.

Supporting disadvantaged children to "reach their potential" becomes ensuring "no one is left behind".

This will be measured by absence rates for children who have special educational needs or disabilities, attend alternative provision or receive free school meals.

Other metrics include the percentage of alternative provision schools and council children's care services rated 'good' or 'outstanding'.

The disadvantage gap and regional divides will also be scrutinised at key stages 2 and 4.

Details of wider reforms featured in a letter from top civil servants to the public accounts committee in March.

Officials said reforms boosted accountability and forced departments to thoroughly consider affordability and risk. It should make plans "more realistic and deliverable" as well as focus on "what truly delivers outcomes for citizens".

News

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DfE counts on abacuses to boost primary maths

SAMANTHA BOOTH

@SAMANTHAJBOTH

The Department for Education is considering spending more than £1 million on 360,000 “Rekenrek-style” abacuses for a new maths catch-up programme for primary pupils.

Launching in September, the year-long “mastering number” programme, run by a DfE-funded maths network, will offer places for reception, year 1 and 2 teachers in up to 6,000 schools. It forms part of the DfE’s education recovery drive post-Covid.

Teachers will receive training to give children a daily 10 to 15-minute “number sense” session, on top of their normal maths lessons.

As part of this, children will use a small abacus-like piece of equipment called a Rekenrek, which will be given to schools free.

The programme was announced after the DfE published an early engagement notice on Monday exploring the “potential” use of Rekenreks. Designed by Adrian Treffers, a Dutch researcher, experts say the tools allow pupils to better visualise numbers and perform mental maths.

The DfE’s specification is specific. For instance, the beads must be 0.8 to 1.5cm wide, and ideally of “the flat type” rather than fully round as “young children find these easier to move”.

The “limited delivery timeframe” gave manufacturers five days to express an interest and confirm they had capacity to deliver the equipment, the DfE said.

The government has not said how much it plans to spend on the equipment. *Schools Week* found various examples for sale online for between £4 and £7 each. Even at the low end of that scale, 360,000 units would cost more than £1.4 million.

The mastering number

programme will be run by the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM), which already coordinates the country’s 40 maths hubs.

Schools will each put forward three teachers, one from each target year group, who will carry out the extra lessons. These teachers will form local work groups of up to 40 schools to share best practice. Subject leaders and headteachers will also be offered support.

The programme will be open to all state-funded primary schools in England. If oversubscribed, priority will be given to schools with high proportions of disadvantaged children.

Debbie Morgan, NCETM’s director of primary mathematics, said that when used by “skilful, trained teachers”, Rekenreks could help pupils “move away from counting in ones to start doing basic mental calculations”.

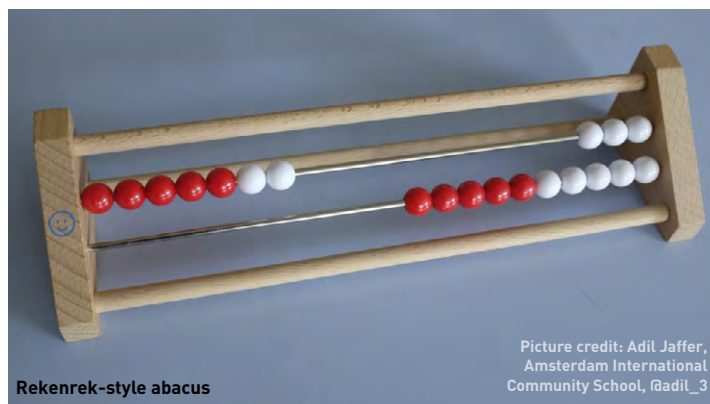
“We call this ‘number sense’, and research tells us that if children develop fluency and flexibility with number facts and relationships early on, they will make much more progress later, in both maths and other subjects.”

Louise Hoskyns-Staples, the honorary secretary of the Association of Maths, welcomed that the equipment would be introduced with training, but expressed doubts about whether buying Rekenreks “is the best use of funds”.

“We are reassured that despite the tight timeline for delivery, this initiative is part of a well-planned national programme.”

But Julie McCulloch, the director of policy at the Association of School and College Leaders, said it seemed “bizarre” that the DfE was “beavering away on trifling orders” for abacuses.

“One small programme for a limited number of schools needs



Rekenrek-style abacus

Picture credit: Adil Jaffer,
Amsterdam International
Community School, @adil_3

to be set into context. What we are really keen to hear about now is concrete information about meaningful pledges of funding to benefit education as a whole.”

The full recovery plan is yet to be announced, but Sir Kevan Collins, the government’s education

recovery tsar, suggested this week that the proposed extended school day should be compulsory.

He also suggested that pupils who struggled to achieve a pass in GCSE maths and English should be given four years to complete the course, rather than two.

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DfE's turnaround trust tells staff there's no such thing as a free lunch

TOM BELGER

@TOM_BELGER

EXCLUSIVE

The government's turnaround trust has made cutbacks at a struggling academy that even the Department for Education's cost-cutting consultants previously left untouched – telling some staff there's no such thing as a free lunch.

The Falcon Education Academies Trust took on its first school, Thornaby Academy in Stockton-on-Tees, last September. The trust was launched in 2019 as part of a DfE pilot project to transform "orphan" schools unable to find sponsors.

By December, Falcon's chief financial officer Jane O'Gara had "discovered that 20 members of Thornaby staff receive free lunches," according to board minutes seen by *Schools Week*.

The new leadership quickly slashed the perk and expects savings of £4,000 to £5,000 a year. O'Gara was also "confident" other savings were achievable elsewhere.

What remains unclear is why changes had not been made previously amid a widening budget deficit and low pupil numbers.

Teesside Learning Trust, the school's former owners, said it had been making "every effort" to contain costs.

It had not only been working with the DfE for three years on "viability issues" but had also been visited by one of the government's school resource management advisers (SRMAs). These advisers were brought into schools under former academies minister Lord Agnew, who famously bet every head a bottle of champagne he could find savings in their schools.

Schools Week has previously revealed SRMAs told one school to replace experienced teachers with support staff, and another to cut lunch portion sizes for pupils.

Yet staff lunches at Thornaby appear to have survived both three years of DfE scrutiny and a cost-cutting adviser visit



unscathed.

Further mystery also surrounds precisely who received free lunches and why.

TLT's spokesperson said the only staff getting free lunches were those on lunchtime duty, costing around £3,000 a year. This policy had faced several reviews, but each found it cheaper than paying teachers to work during breaks, or hiring lunchtime supervisors.

But a Falcon spokesperson said free lunches were only slashed "for those who weren't entitled to it", and in fact remained in place for those on duty. No further details were available.

Free meals as a general perk are relatively rare. Only four per cent of primary teachers surveyed recently by Teacher Tapp said they received them before and during school. Just ten per cent of secondary teachers said they received free lunch daily in a 2018 survey.

However, they are "fairly common practice" for staff on lunchtime duty, according to school finance expert Micon Metcalfe, often in lieu of payment for working through lunch.

Under the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, staff are entitled to a "reasonable" break, and cannot be



forced to work during lunch. Free meals for supervising lunch also form part of many teachers' contracts under the Burgundy Book terms and conditions agreed between unions and local councils.



Micon Metcalfe

Speed read

ITE let down many trainees last year, Ofsted says

Too few initial teacher education partnerships have a “sufficiently ambitious” curriculum for trainees, and too many are over-reliant on school placements to teach content, Ofsted has warned.

The inspectorate this week released research and analysis on teacher training during Covid-19.

Its plans to inspect initial teacher education (ITE) partnerships under the Department for Education’s new core content framework (CCF) were scuppered by the third lockdown.

Instead, it used the spring term to research how partnerships responded to the pandemic and how the curriculum has changed since the new framework was unveiled.

The findings are based on remote visits and conversations with 75 ITE partnerships.

1 PARTNERSHIPS LACK AMBITIOUS CURRICULUM

Ofsted found “too few partnerships” had a “sufficiently ambitious” ITE curriculum.

The new core content framework (CCF), released in 2019, set out a minimum entitlement for trainee teachers.

While all partnership leaders were aware of the CCF, most had not yet fully incorporated it into their ITE curriculum plans, Ofsted found.

A “small number” of partnerships could show they had fully incorporated the new framework, but “very few had designed a curriculum that was more ambitious than this minimum entitlement”.

Ofsted also found “many partnerships” were incorrectly relying on the teachers’ standards, a summative assessment tool, for their curriculum design.

2 TOO MUCH RELIANCE ON PLACEMENTS...

Too many partnerships relied on placement experiences for “learning the curriculum”.

Some providers’ curriculums contained “very little subject-specific content”, which meant the quality of education depended on school or college placements.

Trainees therefore were sometimes asked to teach subjects before they had any training in them.



3... WHICH HAS LEFT ITE SECTOR ‘VULNERABLE TO IMPACT OF COVID-19’

This “placement-reliant” approach left the ITE sector “particularly vulnerable to the impact of Covid-19”.

The pandemic had “significantly narrowed” the range of teaching experiences and some trainees’ practical teaching experience had been “significantly curtailed”.

Ofsted said trainees were particularly behind in their experience of managing behaviour, and many in primary had limited experience of teaching early reading.



4 ONUS ON TRAINEES TO HIGHLIGHT LEARNING GAPS

Ofsted also found some mentors relied on trainees to let them know what they had already learned and what they wanted to work on.

This was particularly apparent in early years and primary where “learning the fundamentals of phase and subject is essential”.

5 EQUALITY OF ACCESS IMPROVES...

Remote learning, however, has improved equality of access to the ITE curriculum, Ofsted found.

For example, technology has allowed trainees to keep learning, despite additional commitments such as childcare.

The need not to travel made it easier to attract visiting speakers, resulting in more trainees learning from those with specific expertise.

The inspectorate also found remote learning had “stimulated deeper and more connected thinking about the ITE curriculum”.



6...BUT TRAINEES WILL LIKELY NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

However, Ofsted found that “despite the best efforts of many partnerships”, too few trainees have had the “full, rounded education that they would normally”.

They have not had the chance to develop classroom management skills, which Ofsted said would leave them likely to need extra support next year and “possibly further into the future”.



Speed read

Edtech demonstrator phase 2: What schools need to know

The Department for Education has confirmed plans for the second phase of its edtech demonstrator programme. Guidance published on Tuesday gives more details of the scheme, including a list of 43 “demonstrator” schools and colleges, and how funding will be allocated and spent.

This comes after *Schools Week* revealed that academy trust United Learning had been appointed to run the scheme in its second year, replacing a consortium of the London Grid For Learning, Education Foundation and Sheffield Hallam University.

1 BROADER REMIT INCLUDING COVID RECOVERY

Although it was first announced before the pandemic, the edtech demonstrator scheme was quickly tailored to support remote learning after schools partially closed last spring.

This year, as well as continuing to support remote education “where needed”, edtech demonstrators will also cover such matters as education recovery.

This will involve showing how technology “can bolster pupil and student progress and outcomes, and support catch-up and recovery activities”.

They will also work with schools to reduce workload, aid school improvement, improve resource management and make the curriculum “accessible and inclusive” for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

2 CHANGES TO GRANT FUNDING

Schools Week revealed last month how United Learning would have responsibility for dishing out £5.5 million in grant funding to demonstrator schools. This prompted worries about a potential conflict of interest, given the trust itself is a demonstrator.

Last year, most edtech demonstrators received between £70,000 and £150,000, though it is understood United Learning received around £200,000 for the involvement of its 73 schools.

This year, the grants will range from £10,000 and £200,000, with United Learning expected to receive the top grant amount again.

The Department for Education has not explained why the grants have changed, but said funding would depend on the level of support provided. The cash is not designed to support schools to buy new IT infrastructure “or pay for marketing materials”.

3 THREE TIERS OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Demonstrator schools will offer three tiers of support to other schools.

Light-touch support, or around six hours training over a term, will be for schools requiring “rapid support on remote

education, catch-up and recovery provision”.

Medium-term support, or around 15 hours of training over the next academic year, will help schools identify “one or two areas where technology can be adopted and have maximum impact for teachers and pupils”.

And long-term support will involve around 30 hours of training over a year. Demonstrators could work with schools to develop a “sustainable digital strategy, embedding technology – particularly digital platforms and devices – as part of a wider change programme, and recognising where technology will and will not make an impact”.

4 NEW ROLE FOR THE EEF AND IMPACTED

ImpactEd has been appointed to carry out an interim and final evaluation of the programme, although United Learning will be responsible for assessing demonstrators’ progress and performance.

The Education Endowment Foundation has also been “invited into phase two of the programme to strengthen the evidence base”, the DfE said.

“During May and early June, they will be delivering a series of short training sessions to the demonstrators on how to embed a change model in schools/colleges, using their existing Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning report.”

5 FOUR SCHOOLS AND A COLLEGE HAVE BACKED OUT

The DfE said earlier this year that four of the 48 demonstrator organisations involved in the first phase would not continue to be involved next year.

But five names from the first phase are absent from the list of second phase demonstrators: Balcarras School in the south west, Warden Park Secondary Academy in the south-east, Hadrian Primary in the north-east, Heronsgate Primary School in London, and Derby College.



EDITORIAL

DO YOU HAVE A STORY?
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The only beneficiaries of Oak National Academy should be the nation's pupils

The creation of the Oak National Academy is one of the great successes to emerge from this awful period we have been living through. A simple idea sketched out over a few days very quickly flourished to become a pillar of our schools' efforts to ensure pupils could access lessons.

The effort and hours put in by the collective that came together to get this project off the deserve huge praise. And no one deserves greater admiration than the teachers, who have up their time for free, initially, to ensure that children did not miss out at home.

Meanwhile, their schools and trusts bought into the mission and freed their staff – at an incredibly busy period – to help out. They also handed over the intellectual property of those lessons for free, along with curriculum materials.

The resource has become a greatly

appreciated national asset, fed by a collective goodwill – the spirit of everyone pitching in for the greater good during a national emergency.

Its custodians now have the unenviable task of developing a plan to secure its future. They have, rightly, considered a range of options, and it is clear there is no straightforward solution.

Those who have devoted hours of hard work and goodwill will, however, feel rightly disappointed that significant time and energy was used to investigate the merits of turning Oak into a private entity. Enabling Oak to generate millions for shareholders was never worth that time and energy. Put simply: it was wholly wrong, and such a plan should never see the light of day again.

Oak's custodians must instead now rapidly secure a workable solution that ensures the only beneficiary of its existence are our pupils and our schools.

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Exam boards don't deserve the criticism they are getting

Adam Dineen

When we were caught with our pants down last year, we should have had a back-up plan for this year. When we were then told in January there wouldn't be exams, exam boards knew they would be asked to supply materials that could be used for assessment. I don't recall exact dates, but by February it was clear that exam boards would be expected to supply "materials".

The nature of these materials wasn't made clear for months, but in the case of core subjects, they were clearly going to be past exam questions, or unreleased future questions.

The materials that were eventually released were a Word document full of screen grabs of about three questions per topic. I routinely make more comprehensive sets of topic-based revision from the resources that are available to teachers, without being paid extra for it, in an editable document format, in about 30 minutes. The low quality of these materials is indefensible.

Alex Thirkill

Clearly exam boards, as with many commercial enterprises, have needed funding to keep going during the recent epidemic. So, whilst the limited reduction in fees, whilst teaching staff do the additional work for no pay, is incredibly galling, it is understandable as a messy necessity.

However, the high level of fees and the oligopoly of a small number of providers, combined with low rates of pay for ground-floor examiners, were systemic problems prior to Covid.

The big boards should either be broken up into in excess of ten, so that there is genuine choice of specification, or nationalised and integrated into one examinations and statistical authority, to dial back the empire-building, vested interests and duplication.

Ofsted may temporarily extend inspection window

Teacher Toolkit

A sensible move indeed, but can we safely say that Ofsted in its current form is not fit for purpose?

Ofsted HMIs are expected to evaluate more with less time and cash. This means all our schools are not safeguarded; our teachers do not have time to showcase the work they do well.

Having Ofsted thinly stretched is not good for anyone, especially to deal with illegal schools; helping vulnerable young people in social settings.

A solution would be to reform the current grading system with investment from the government; to move away from the

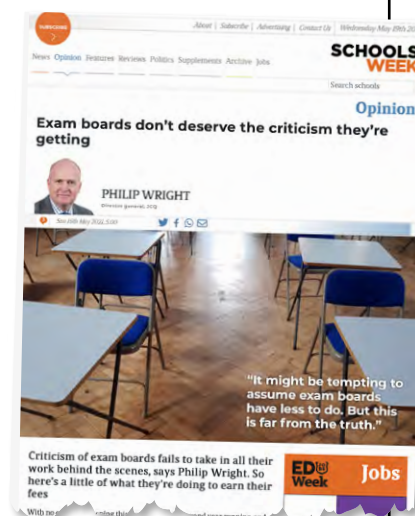
REPLY OF THE WEEK

Andrew Shepherd

Exam boards don't deserve the criticism they are getting

What an outrageous statement. These quality assurance systems are completely unrealistic and therefore unfit for purpose. They have clearly not been developed in collaboration with customers. As a customer I can

confidently say that the unprecedented support mentioned above has been spectacularly useless. I am in the process of manoeuvring 400 A-level and BTec students through this process and I have never worked so hard in my life (my day job, made harder by the pandemic, still has to go on). The guidance and support I've received from the two exam boards I use has been non-existent. It's galling to know that we're still paying the full fee.



poor-research methodology; introduce a reformed model of inspection that takes place with all schools, colleges and EYFS providers in hubs, and on a three-year cycle (rather than ten+ year absence for some).

It will take at least five years for ALL schools to experience the new inspection framework. With the pandemic, it's going to be even longer!

Ofsted's guide to a 'high-quality' RE curriculum

Dr Kathryn Wright

Culham St Gabriel's Trust welcomes the publication of Ofsted's RE research review. This review clearly articulates the importance of understanding what we mean by substantive knowledge, ways of knowing or becoming scholarly in RE, and personal knowledge. We support the call for the effective sequencing of knowledge enabling pupils to build towards subject-specific end goals. The review reminds leaders that RE is to be taught in all schools and in all key stages, and that an ambitious curriculum is to be delivered. We believe that this review supports our own vision for a broad-based, critical and reflective education in Religion and Worldviews contributing to a well-informed, respectful and open society.



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'Ofsted isn't trusted by teachers – the trust is broken'

Solving special educational needs provision and scrapping SATs are just a few policies firmly in the sights of ambitious Liberal Democrat deputy leader Daisy Cooper

Daisy Cooper, deputy leader and education spokesperson, Liberal Democrats

Unlike the new Labour shadow education team, the Liberal Democrats are standing by what could be quite the vote-winner among teachers: scrapping Ofsted.

Daisy Cooper, the party's deputy leader and education spokesperson since September, tells me the inspectorate is "not fit for purpose".

"Ofsted isn't trusted by teachers, that trust has been broken," she says. "We want broader criteria for assessment which will be about supporting schools, not scaring the living daylights out of them."

It puts Cooper in line with her predecessor Layla Moran, who described the inspectorate as a "completely broken" brand. But unlike Moran, who served as the Lib Dems' education spokesperson under three different leaders from 2017 to 2020, Cooper is not a former teacher (her background is in human rights campaign work).

However, Cooper points out that her mother was an art teacher who worked with pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). "I remember as a child, my mum would be white in the face knowing Ofsted were coming in," continues Cooper. "It would be like a day of examination, which is not how it should be for anyone working in their job."

The Lib Dem 2019 manifesto pledged to "replace Ofsted with a new HM Inspector of Schools". Inspections would "take place every three years and should consider a broader

Profile: Daisy Cooper



Cooper at private St Albans School

range of factors", including the wellbeing of staff and pupils.

The party's current position on Ofsted seems clearer than Labour's, which in its 2019 manifesto also said the inspectorate was "unfit for purpose" and would be replaced with "health checks" and occasional in-depth inspections.

But after Labour's election defeat, then shadow schools minister Wes Streeting said he's "not sure" that "hoping we can scrap Ofsted" is the right approach. Labour is now looking into turning Ofsted into an "improvement agency", shadow education secretary Kate Green has added, but the plans are not yet beaten out.

But the Lib Dems aren't for budging, Cooper says. Her party continues to stand by its other commitments, too. It wants to increase the schools budget by £10 billion over the next five years, as well as provide £7 billion for school buildings and increase teacher numbers by 20,000. Annual pay rises of at least three per cent and replacing school league tables have also been promised.

In a way, the vision has been clearer than Labour's own National Education Service (which could also be for the chop), and cuts to the heart of many of the biggest issues facing schools. Cooper hones in on another of these. "I've been very outspoken about the need to scrap SATs," she says. "It's another form of teaching to the test and it creates a lot of stress and detracts from proper teaching time. I'd want lighter-touch testing." You can hear many primary schools cheering.

But the last election was not a good one for the Liberal Democrats. They dropped from 12 to 11 seats after humiliatingly losing their leader Jo Swinson's seat to the SNP.

It's an unbelievably bad outlook compared with 2005, when the party held a whopping 62 seats, and 2010 when they had 57 and made it into government. Since then, blamed



Cooper at Albany Montessori School nursery in St Albans

"My mum would be white in the face knowing Ofsted were coming in"

for compromising their values, they have haemorrhaged seats.

But bucking the trend two years ago was Cooper herself. She won her constituency, the well-off commuter town of St Albans, in Hertfordshire, from the incumbent Conservative in a surprise swipe (it was the first time a Liberal Democrat had taken the seat since it was held by the Liberal Party in 1904).

It was the culmination of a decade-long campaign for Cooper: born in Suffolk, she had been the party's candidate for Suffolk Coastal at the 2010 election and came second; stood for party president in 2014 and came second; stood in Mid Sussex in the 2015 election and came fourth; stood for St Albans in 2017 and came second, until finally winning.

Backing a cause is in her DNA, she tells me. "I've had campaigning blood in me since I was a little girl. I remember hearing about

acid rain growing up, and after school I would go and collect conkers and tell people, 'If you don't plant these, you're killing the planet!'"

Aged six, Cooper was on her first march with her mum, a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and later at her state secondary, Bungay High School, she successfully campaigned against a "new scratchy jumper" that was too expensive.

After attending Framlingham College, a private sixth-form (and Ed Sheeran's alma mater), she headed to Leeds University to study law, where she campaigned for more equipment in the computer lab.

Cooper's commitments have a habit of producing results. Aged 23, she designed her own job and got the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to fund it. Pardon? I say. "I designed a one-year project, which included my salary, and they agreed to fund it."

Profile: Daisy Cooper



Cooper at private school St Columba's College in St Albans



Cooper at Maple primary school in St Albans

Political deadlocks between Commonwealth countries were preventing leaders from coming up with a unified system for delivering aid, and Cooper had a solution. "I wrote letters to all 53 heads of Commonwealth states, and eight replied." She says the heads of state were surprised to meet their 23-year-old organiser at the first meeting in New York.

Then Cooper worked for the Commonwealth Secretariat, which runs meetings and provides policy advice, and there campaigned against human rights abuses in Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe.

Following ten years in international affairs, she became joint executive director for Hacked Off, the campaign for press regulation. She herself insists on remaining private: she declines to discuss her family aside from her mother, revealing only that her father was an accountant. One gets the

"I wrote letters to all 53 heads of Commonwealth states"

impression of a life committed to causes, and even where she has been unsuccessful, she has been noticed: her first loss in Suffolk Coastal nevertheless resulted in an eight per cent swing to her. "That put me on the map," she says.

Cooper has been tagged by commentators as "one to watch". She was trusted to run Jo Swinson's successful leadership campaign, and given she was only elected in 2019, it has been a rapid rise to the deputy leadership. Her appearance on Question Time this month was notable for her ability to get

the audience onside with a persuasive and passionate argument, and several tweets about her stated the tweeter would now vote Lib Dem.

When I ask Cooper why she didn't run in the leadership contest that Ed Davey won last summer, she hints pretty clearly at the future. That decision "was always going to depend on the timing", she says, and since she had only been an MP for five months she "decided that right then wasn't the right time for me".

Until such a time, one of her key priorities as education spokesperson is SEND. "We need a lot more money, we need to change the way SEND support is being provided. In my surgery, parents are battling against the system. There will be a crunch point on high-needs funding – many local authorities have gulfs of millions of pounds." She thinks the government needs a "separate SEND-specific strategy" within its recovery plan.

Yet will the message get through? Streeting made a perceptive comment about Labour's proposal to reform Ofsted: the "public heard the 'scrap Ofsted' bit" not the "we want to replace it with something better" bit.

I press Cooper on this point. For instance, would she scrap the 'outstanding' grade? "I don't have a gut instinct about the outstanding grade," she says, rather in a change of step from her usual campaigning talk. "Any changes in the system need to balance what parents and guardians want to see, but also fairly reflect what happens in schools." Perhaps her position is not that much clearer than Kate Green's quite yet.

With Lib Dems seeing growth in this month's local elections – they gained one new council and eight new councillors, as Labour plummeted – the party needs to be clear how, under first-past-the-post, its offer to schools clearly differs from others. It is always at risk of being overlooked: in July last year, Davey and Moran blasted Michael Gove for taking credit for the pupil premium policy, which they said Lib Dem ministers drove through.

But Cooper has her eye firmly on the campaign. "We're looking at those places where we're in second place to the Conservatives, and that's about 80 seats across the country. Our priority is to oust this Tory government. It really matters."

Opinion

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

Covid has created new challenges, but it has also highlighted existing ones. Eventually, we must tackle them all, writes recovery tsar Kevan Collins' chief adviser

Over the period of the pandemic, schools and teachers have acted with great skill and dedication to ensure pupils continued to access high-quality education. In spite of those efforts, the majority of pupils returned having missed 115 days of school, and emerging evidence indicates a learning gap of some FOUR months in English, slightly more in maths, and greater still for disadvantaged pupils.

The full picture is still developing, and it will take the next 18 months to fully grasp the long-term impacts. As a result, any recovery plan will need to strike a difficult balance on a number of fronts.

For a start, it will need to be both highly focused and highly flexible in response to changing circumstances. To achieve that, and to maximise the contribution of local authorities, MATs and other agencies, the recovery must be school-led and convened in local areas.

Then, the recovery package must balance pupils' academic progress and their wellbeing needs. One-to-one and small-group tuition is a promising way to deliver that, and the NTP has already done a great job in enrolling 200,000 pupils. But the programme's expansion over the next few years will be critical, and schools will need far greater flexibility as to the way it is delivered.

But perhaps the toughest balance to strike is between the need for additional time for teaching and learning on one hand and care for teachers' workloads and professional development on the other.

The evidence from education recovery after school closures (for example, after



SIR ALAN WOOD CBE

Founder and chief executive,
The Learning Trust

The journey through recovery must lead to reform

Hurricane Katrina and after Argentina's year-long teacher strikes in the 1990s) indicates that additional time in school is a necessary factor in any plan's effectiveness. It is unlikely that recovery could be successful in England without it.

for it. Last week's launch of a wellbeing charter creates an encouraging context for developing policy in the coming years, but an expansion of high-quality professional development will be crucial to support it.

And beyond these tensions, the

“ Existing weaknesses include assessment, accountability and curriculum

In addition, there is more to be done to develop the workforce, particularly with regard to special educational needs and digital teaching and learning.

But teachers' time is already stretched. So in the first instance, teachers who agree to additional time on catch-up programmes must be paid

pandemic has highlighted long-standing weaknesses in our education system, including assessment, accountability, curriculum, support for pupils' wellbeing and pupil underachievement. So we must look beyond simple recovery and open a sector-wide discussion on reform.



For instance, could tutoring be systematically embedded? Could the flexible, focused and skilled intervention it promises be the resource teacher leaders need to support pupils across year groups, subject areas and wellbeing programmes? Could it solve some workload issues and maximise teachers' classroom impact?

And what type of assessment model is needed for the next decade? The world of work and the world of learning are now reconfiguring at pace, so what skills, knowledge and aptitudes do our young people need to navigate it? These factors must determine the why, what, when and how of assessment.

What outcomes do we want curriculum to achieve? The sidelining of the national curriculum during the pandemic has led to much discussion about its purpose. It has also created an opportunity to reflect on the bizarre anomaly by which it does not apply to over 40 per cent of our schools and the majority of our pupils.

And what is the best way to hold schools accountable? Lockdowns revealed a wide range of innovative support for schools from parents and communities. Could local accountability be built on to promote that parental support and improve how policy is shared? Accountability should not be down to Ofsted alone. Already, constructive questions are being raised about how we can refocus accountability on improvement, the promotion of system learning and pedagogical excellence.

Recovery is a long-term goal. After all, the pandemic is still with us and we don't yet know its full impact on education and young people.

But recovery offers a gateway to discuss reform, and that is an opportunity we should take.

Opinion

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

The DfE's new initiative is welcome, writes Mary Bousted, but it can't be used to paper over the cracks of a broken accountability system

The DfE and Ofsted recently launched a staff wellbeing charter to "protect, promote and enhance" staff wellbeing. The NEU supports this initiative because a commitment to improve access to mental health and wellbeing resources and to embed wellbeing in CPD is a welcome move away from former chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw's famous proclamation that teachers don't understand the meaning of stress.

But for as long as they refuse to acknowledge current research on the strong link between poverty and attainment and continue to hold schools accountable for things they cannot control, no commitment to a charter will convince me that they are serious about promoting teacher wellbeing.

The uncomfortable truth is that teachers in England understand very well what stress means and how it affects them. England comes at the top of teacher stress OECD league table: 38 per cent of teachers in England (more than double the OECD average) feel stressed a lot of the time, according to the 2018 TALIS survey.

Stressed teachers are less likely to be satisfied with their job and more likely to look to leave it. So, when we see teachers leaving the profession in droves (more than one in four within two years of qualification, and nearly 40 per cent within ten years), and when the main driver for leaving is the stress caused by excessive workload, we can see that we have a problem.

What causes the teacher stress epidemic in this country? It is not the teaching. English teachers' teaching hours are about the OECD average. The



MARY BOUSTED

Joint general secretary, NEU

A wellbeing charter is only a small step in the right direction

problem, teachers report, is excessive time spent on lesson preparation, marking and assessing pupil's work and completing administrative tasks. The result: teachers work more unpaid overtime than any other profession in the country, with working weeks approaching 50 hours.

heavy weight of teacher accountability which results in school cultures that are uncollaborative, isolating and dismissive of teachers' knowledge and skills. Teachers here are less likely than their OECD counterparts to be asked their views on professional issues that are central to their working

"In addition to excessive workload, teachers are excessively watched

In addition to excessive workload, teachers are also excessively watched, coming top of the OECD league table when it comes to their work being observed and monitored. Lesson observations, book scrutiny and the test scores of their students all add to a

lives – including the curriculum and the school's disciplinary policies.

School leaders confirm these depressing findings. They are far less likely than their international counterparts to be frequently engaged in supporting cooperation among

teachers to develop new teaching practices. Conversely, they spend more time than their international counterparts holding teachers accountable for their students' learning outcomes.

Of course, teachers should hold some responsibility for their students' outcomes, but as the OECD observes, "Such accountability...should be perceived as fair and should take into account factors beyond the control of teachers, such as the characteristics of the student intake, the resources available within schools and the local context."

But this is just what our school accountability system does not do. Ofsted does not take into account the context in which schools operate and the level of challenge they face. The new inspection framework was designed to do so but evidence to date still shows that Ofsted disproportionately awards poor inspection grades to schools doing the hardest work educating disadvantaged pupils.

Is it teachers' or leaders' fault that nine out of every class of 30 pupils are living in poverty? Can it ever be right to hold them solely accountable for an attainment gap, 40 per cent of which is set in stone before they start school?

The DfE's busy-work to avoid facing that fact is a major cause of the workload that has such a negative effect on wellbeing. The other is fear of Ofsted, which creates a climate of compliance that robs teachers of their professionalism.

Until they wake up to their role in creating this wellbeing crisis, their charter will be nothing more than a palliative. And while that's better than nothing, it's far from what's truly needed to stem the flow of good teachers leaving the sector.



Opinion

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

The post-Covid recovery calls for collaboration over competition and our MAT-to-MAT peer review pilot shows what can be achieved, write Helen Rowland and Andy Yarrow

We know school-to-school collaboration and peer review are effective in supporting school improvement, but this sort of work is far less common between multi-academy trusts. Yet our recent experience of a MAT-to-MAT peer review process has taught us that collaboration – rather than competition – holds real potential to make us more effective leaders and improve practice on a large scale.

To begin with, we had different levels of experience of peer review. Focus Trust has been undertaking reviews across our 15 schools for the past five years as part of the Schools Partnership Programme run by Education Development Trust. Having already seen the benefits of professional honesty and constructive, challenging conversation via one MAT-to-MAT review, we were keen to participate in another through this pilot. By contrast, Anthem had limited prior experience.

What we had in common at the start was a shared belief: if we want our schools to work collaboratively, we must set an example at the top. So we went into the process with an open mind, and we have both been impressed by the impact.

We've made significant improvements so far. At Anthem, we probed familiarity with and ownership and understanding of the trust's values. The peer review process was crucial in giving us clarity about the steps we needed to take to develop the culture of the organisation, and we've made considerable progress in embedding those values. Our people don't just

HELEN ROWLAND

CEO, Focus Trust

ANDY YARROW

CEO, Anthem Trust



Collaboration between trusts can win the Covid recovery

know them; they are proud of them and genuinely enthusiastic about modelling them. Indeed, Focus Trust was further ahead in this area and has been a great model to bring us on.

For collaboration and peer review to be successful, you need mutual

it would be of value.

Of course, this also required us to deliberately make ourselves vulnerable, to be up front about the areas we really needed to address.

To give ourselves the best chance of improvement, we needed to

“For our schools to collaborate, we must set an example at the top

respect and honesty. If we told each other everything was going brilliantly when it wasn't, the process would have failed. So while we were initially apprehensive about providing feedback that might be uncomfortable, we quickly developed ways to do so respectfully, which was vital to ensure

know there would be some tough conversations and that some things would be exposed that weren't all positive. We're pleased to say there were plenty of positives too, but it is all too easy to develop blind spots within an organisation. Having an external view is extremely helpful,



and a low-stakes context for evaluation, invaluable.

The new relationship we've formed has proven highly valuable too, personally and professionally. Chief executives don't necessarily have a large network of people they can be completely honest with. But the peer review experience means we would have no concerns about sharing anything moving forward, peer coaching each other where we wanted another CEO's perspective on tricky issues. It has been an amazing learning opportunity to see each other in action – in our head offices, in our schools and with our teams. So why stop?

Putting ourselves aside, the collaboration has also provided opportunities for our teams to work together with their counterparts. There are a huge number of conversations going on at every level, helping the participants to see how things are done elsewhere, to reflect on their own practice and contributing to their professional development.

At Anthem, for example, we deliberately involved experienced headteachers who were not on the executive team. Our aim was to enable them to develop experience of working beyond their own schools and both have now gone on to take more responsibility supporting other schools.

This sort of collaboration, in a space can that often be competitive, has been transformative for our trusts, our schools, our staff and our own development. If every MAT leader had this kind of opportunity, there's no telling how much the system could gain.

As we look to rebuild from Covid, valuing collaboration over competition is surely an area of policy worth exploring.

Opinion

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

The first wave of NTP had to make in-flight changes to accommodate looked-after children. The second wave must pre-empt remaining challenges, writes Simon Barnes

When the national tutoring programme launched last November, the criteria for student inclusion was registration on a school roll. In theory, this made sense; every child in the country should be on a school roll.

But the reality is that some are not. Many students remain outside of mainstream education in the long term for a number of reasons, while others are simply between schools. These students are more likely to be looked-after. For them, it is their virtual school who needed access to the NTP to support them.

Unfortunately, they initially lacked that access. The NTP is designed to support schools, including special schools and alternative provision. It is up to them to decide which of their pupils need the programme's support. They are encouraged to select disadvantaged children, including those who are looked after, but that's far from a guarantee.

Thankfully, the NTP identified this issue early on and updated their criteria to allow virtual schools to access tuition for these students. Now, as we approach the end of the first academic year of the programme, we have an opportunity to reflect on how the programme has adapted to support some of the most vulnerable children in the country.

Because challenges remain. As a virtual school head, if children in your care are on a school roll, you need to ask their schools to consider them for inclusion in the NTP if they've yet to be included. And if schools have put



SIMON BARNES

Founder and CEO, TLC Live

NTP: how to ensure looked-after children get a look-in

together very specific tuition plans for the NTP based on academic priorities (for example, tuition for their year 10s with GCSEs looming large), looked-after children could still miss out.

In addition, we've seen some confusion persist within virtual schools regarding their suitability for the programme. So there's still a job of

the NTP is designed to support. Some 6,000 schools are currently signed up to the NTP, and it is likely that many of those will have selected their looked-after children for tutoring. But given the above challenges, how do we ensure more of them can access that support in September?

“Challenges remain and looked-after children could still miss out

communication to be done.

All looked-after children are eligible for pupil premium funding. They are therefore the exact demographic

First, it is important that it is not just senior leadership teams who make decisions around NTP selection. Special educational needs



coordinators and other teachers who are directly responsible for looked-after children need to be involved too. These teachers traditionally set up supplementary tuition for the children they are responsible for anyway, so they should be able to directly utilise the programme. Working out how to get them more involved will be key.

Second, virtual schools need to know students are signed up to the NTP. Whoever the government appoints to run the programme going forward should make this a priority. There may be difficulties with data sharing, but virtual schools should be able to easily identify which of their students are accessing the additional catch-up tuition, enabling them to apply directly and put their own NTP packages in place for those that are not.

Prior to the NTP launching, we had already worked with over half of the virtual schools through their Pupil Premium Plus funding. That has meant we have been able to engage some of them in the new programme, organising tuition for students in between school places.

Going forward, the independent evaluation of the NTP's Tuition Partners pillar will tell us more about looked-after children's involvement. It will be important that we learn from that process for year two, so that we can specifically track tuition benefitting these children.

Huge strides have already been made to catch up. Now is the time to ensure the most vulnerable are included and given the support they need – not simply to keep them on track with what would be covered during school, but to help them restart their education with confidence.

Reviews

BOOK REVIEW



Retrieval Practice: Resource Guide

Author: Kate Jones

Publisher: John Catt Educational

Reviewer: Emma Cate Stokes, key stage one phase lead, East Sussex

In its simplest form, 'retrieval practice' is a pedagogical method that is all about moving knowledge from short-term to long-term memory, and Kate Jones is rapidly becoming the go-to person for understanding and implementing it. A practising history teacher who uses it with her students to ensure stuff sticks, what really shines through on every page of this book is that she practises what she preaches.

In her previous books, she has delved heavily into the theory behind the practice, and this book builds on those. While I would recommend reading the previous instalments, they aren't strictly necessary. Here, readers will find exactly what the cover promises: a compendium of research-informed, tried-and-tested practical ideas and resources for implementing retrieval in the classroom.

Retrieval Practice: Resource Guide comes in at under 100 pages, so it is a short read. And crammed full of practical tips, ideas and takeaways, it's perfect for busy classroom teachers looking to introduce a new dimension to their teaching immediately.

There are four chapters, each one placing retrieval in a particular context. The first, which looks at retrieval practice tasks in the classroom, is the one I found most useful. Jones explains that her teaching mantra when planning and delivering classroom tasks is "low effort, high impact", and that is certainly the case here.

Each suggestion contains an example of what it could look like, a brief

explanation of how it works and top tips for implementation. The layout is accessible and each tip can be taken in isolation, making the book easy to dip in and out of.

The second chapter focuses on retrieval practice tasks to support literacy. I am sure this will be a particularly helpful chapter for secondary school teachers whose subject specialism isn't English. Jones explains that the development of literacy skills shouldn't fall to those only in the English department and offers a plethora of practical activities to support literacy across subjects via retrieval practice.

This does, however, highlight one small issue with the book. While Jones does acknowledge younger students and offers some examples of how activities can be adapted to suit them, overall the book feels more angled towards secondary teachers. Many of the activities wouldn't be appropriate for reception or key stage one in their current form. This is not to say that primary colleagues can't take the fundamentals of Jones' ideas and contextualise them for their settings, but it would require some careful planning and reflection.

I found the third chapter, which responds directly to the context of our Covid world, particularly eye-opening. In it, we are given examples of how to implement retrieval practice with online and/or remote learning. Putting aside the many issues with accessibility

and cost (among others), if your students have access to devices in the classroom or at home, you'll be surprised at the many ways technology can be used to complement retrieval practice.

More than that: we've all heard of technology's potential to lessen workload, close gaps and provide instant feedback, but the reality often fails to match the sales pitch. Here, Jones shows us how it can actually be done, which is surely every teacher's dream!

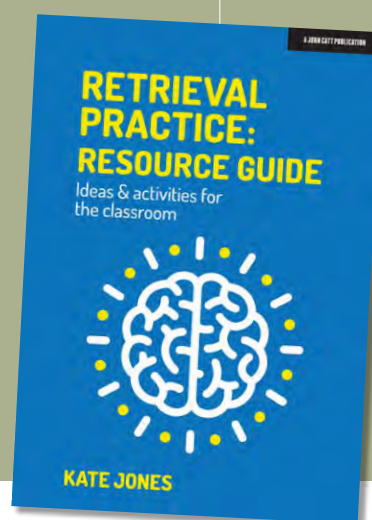
The final chapter details how retrieval can be used to support revision, with a stress on year-round practice over last-minute exam preparation.

There is a lovely touch at the end of the book where teachers can scan a QR code to have instant access to Jones' blogs, templates and study guides, all for free. These are very useful in and of themselves.

So despite the book being more appropriate for upper key stage two and secondary school teachers, it is an excellent addition to Jones' *Retrieval* series. As a primary teacher, I can only

hope it will be expanded further with a book specifically aimed at us.

No education book can hope to be all things to all parts of the sector. But the wealth of examples, tips and activities Jones sets out here are well thought-out and rooted in practice, and that means any teacher can at least use them as a springboard.



Reviews



Our blog reviewer of the week is
Melissa Jane, class teacher, Castle
School, Cambridge

@MelJaneSEN

Thinking Out of the Box

@eyecantalk

As we begin to take tentative steps out of lockdown and back to (dare I say it?) normality, it's worth remembering that the "normal" we had before didn't work for everybody. Since the beginning of the pandemic, disabled people have been pointing out that adaptations we've been requesting for years (such as remote attendance at lectures and performances) suddenly became "magically possible" when non-disabled people needed them in lockdown.

This post by Jonathan Bryan, who talks and writes using eye-gaze technology, explains how his sister's school enabled him to participate in lessons during the pandemic thanks to the creative and flexible mindset we've all had to adopt in the past year. He hopes — as I do — that this mindset will continue post-Covid, creating a new, better normal that includes everyone.

Creating Sensory Access Through Stories

@jo3grace

We're all about to rediscover crowds, concerts and the inside of restaurants, which will mean plenty of new sights, sounds and smells. That makes it a great

TOP BLOGS of the week



time to make sure we're supporting our learners with sensory processing needs, with the help of the ever-insightful Joanna Grace.

Here, Grace offers a concise introduction to sensory storytelling, using "smells, touches, sights, sounds and even tastes and movements" to create a narrative experience. Sensory stories can be adapted from existing stories, but here, Grace's focus is on enabling practical access — for example, introducing learners to the sensory experience of going to the hairdressers or catching a train. I use sensory stories all the time in my literacy lessons, but this post made me think about how we can use them as access tools as the world re-opens.

The Power of Gardening on the Mental Health of Children

Cath Baynton via @sfmtweet

I can often be sceptical of "awareness" weeks, especially for topics as complex as mental health. However, this year's theme of 'nature' strikes a chord with me, and this post offers a touching overview of the benefits of cultivating gardens for

children's mental health. The quotes from young people are especially lovely; it's hard to argue with "planting seeds is really peaceful".

Like mental healthcare, however, it's easier to write about than to put into practice. With the heavy academic demands of the mainstream curriculum, where is the time and space for gardening? As one young person quoted puts it: "I didn't like how little time we had. I wanted to stay for more time." Hopefully, the work of organisations like School Food Matters can help schools make that happen.

Black Woman's Load

@_ShonaghReid via @DiverseEd2020

I've written previously about the need to make sure our commitments to anti-racism are more than platitudes. This blog by Shonagh Reid, first published on her blog last month and featured on DiverseEd this week, is essential reading for educators who want to do just that.

Reid's post discusses a UCL report which details the "additional 'hidden workload' of coping with racism" faced by black teachers in UK schools. Reid explains what this looks like for black women specifically:

"We don't want to be seen as aggressive. So what do we do? We ensure we plan our conversations carefully. We read books on difficult conversations and plan in detail what we are going to say. How will we sit? Where will we sit? What will we offer in a way of refreshment? What will we wear? [...] let's examine colours, fabrics and the cut of our clothes to soften the image."

Reid asks non-black educators to "understand more about [our] own fears and biases", so that the black women we work with can "put down their load". In this time of post-Covid transition, we are all thinking about what to take with us and what to leave behind: let's make sure we are paying attention to who has to carry the most.

Research

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

Who benefits from inclusion?

**Rob Webster, Associate professor,
UCL Centre for Inclusive Education**

The enduring debate about the inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can be as polarising as it is emotive.

Some argue inclusion is a human right, and that the very existence of special schools symbolises resistance to full inclusion.

Advocates point to the positive impact that the presence of children with SEND can have on their peers, in terms of empathy and valuing individual diversity and difference.

Ranged against them are sceptical voices who say the very idea of the "everyone in one setting" form of inclusion is flawed. They highlight the lack of specialist skills, training and experience within the mainstream school workforce, less appropriate and less flexible curricula and the risk of social rejection. Some also argue that children with SEND absorb too much teacher time and attention to the detriment of their classmates.

This "who benefits" question prompted the SEN Policy Research Forum's recent review of the international evidence on the impact of inclusion for children who do and do not have SEND. Conducted by Peter Gray, Brahm Norwich and myself, it addressed two broad questions.

The first was whether children with SEND do better or worse if they are included in mainstream schools? The second, whether children without SEND in mainstream classes where those with SEND are included do better or worse as a result?

When it comes to the first question, we found that on balance research findings indicate greater academic gains for children with mild-to-moderate needs educated in mainstream settings,



rather than in separate specialist settings. Gains are reported in literacy and maths, and the positive effects are more pronounced in primary schools.

Additionally, a large systematic review found positive outcomes for children with SEND in terms of social engagement, peer acceptance, behaviour issues and participation in school and community groups. It also revealed greater independence and social skills, but two other reviews covering this area reported a more mixed picture.

With regards to our second question, most studies generally show neutral or positive effects of inclusion on the learning of children without SEND. However, the impact associated with the inclusion of children with emotional/behavioural difficulties or more severe/complex SEND is less clear.

One review of 26 studies found 23 per cent showed positive gains on academic outcomes, 58 per cent showed no impact and 19 per cent reported negative effects.

We found comparatively less research on the personal/social effects of inclusion on children without SEND. However, one sizeable review provided strong evidence of a

reduction in discriminating attitudes and higher responsiveness to the needs of others, particularly in relation to children with Down's syndrome and peers with broader intellectual disabilities.

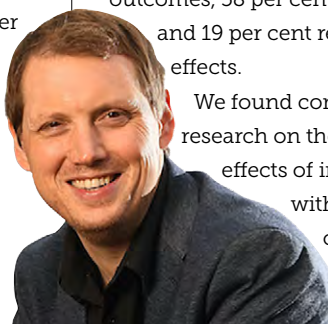
Research into the relative value and impact of mainstream schooling for children with SEND is beset by methodological issues and limitations. A particular limitation we noticed is that studies on inclusion tend not to differentiate between outcomes for groups of children with different types of SEND.

Our review seems to suggest that mainstream inclusion has no overall negative effect for children with or without SEND. If anything, the impact of including children with SEND in mainstream settings is moderately positive or neutral.

However, it is naïve to think the debate about inclusion is reducible to a straightforward 'good/bad' verdict. Echoing findings from my own longitudinal research, Ofsted's new *Supporting SEND* report reveals concerning patterns of separation within mainstream schools, which "meant that some pupils were not able to participate in some learning opportunities and some pupils were missing entire chunks of the curriculum".

So is our system hardwired to resist inclusion? Our review suggests not. Effects are stronger where teachers hold positive attitudes, where staff are well trained, use strategies geared to diverse needs and work collaboratively within a problem-solving school culture.

These factors moderate impact and are therefore amenable to change. With the findings from the government's SEND review due later this year, this will be an encouragement to advocates who argue that having more inclusively minded people acting at every level of the system is as essential as additional resourcing.



WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

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

MONDAY

Things just didn't add up when a mysterious Department for Education tender to find a firm to supply 360,000 special abacuses surfaced earlier this week.

The advert was oddly specific. The government wants to know whether a firm can supply "rekenrek-style" abacuses to schools from September, with beads of a certain shape and size, and other stipulations about the frame and poles used.

Of course, the tender was a classic case of the DfE burying a potentially good news story about a much larger project that will train teachers how to use the tools to support maths catch-up.

But given nobody at the DfE actually seems to talk to each other, it's not hard to see how this happened.

We've now lost count of the number of times the government has thrown away a positive announcement by being seemingly unprepared for its own actions. Maybe we need an abacus to help...

The NAHT is clearly out to prove that it's not just any union, it's an M&S union.

Visitors to the heads' union's website were this week being promised a £50 voucher for the upmarket food and clothes chain if they signed up.

So now we know why the membership has swelled so much over the past year...

"I am a senior civil servant at the Department for Education. I did a history



Gareth
@GarethConyard

I am a senior civil servant at the Department for Education. I did a history degree.

degree," tweeted Gareth Conyard on Monday.

No, it wasn't international tweet about your degree day, but rather a response to some controversial comments by his boss, Gavin Williamson.

Writing for Conservative Home about reforms that could see tuition fees reduced and funding topped up for science degrees, the ed sec took what has widely been interpreted as a swipe at arts and humanities degrees, welcoming a "pivot away from dead-end courses that leave young people with nothing but debt".

We think Williamson is being a little harsh, including on himself, considering he has a degree in social sciences and made it into the Cabinet.

WEDNESDAY

It has become increasingly obvious over the past year and a bit that it's not really the Department for Education in charge of education policy in England, but Downing Street.

This was self-evident this week when the prime minister casually announced a couple of education policies with little detail or fanfare, and seemingly without

informing the DfE before he did so, leaving poor Sanctuary Buildings staffers scrambling around for information the next day.

Johnson claimed the government would invest £10 million in improving teaching quality in four areas of England. But the DfE confirmed hours later that none of the money was new, and in fact half of it had already been allocated to an academy trust capacity programme.

The DfE was also unable to explain how the four areas had been picked in the first place, which is reassuring to say the least.

THURSDAY

The DfE's struggles seemingly went from bad to worse as the week went on.

Earlier this week, it announced that edtech demonstrators in the second phase of the programme would receive between £70,000 and £150,000 each, the same range of grants available in phase one.

Just days later, the department was forced to issue a correction stating the grants for year two would in fact range from £10,000 to £200,000, with no explanation of the difference.

A fifth school appears to have dropped out of the programme too – forcing the DfE to remove a name from its list of demonstrator schools. However, it's not clear whether the school in question backed out recently, or whether the DfE included it on the list by mistake. Anything's possible.

HAYS Recruiting experts
in Education

LOOKING FOR YOUR NEXT PERMANENT ROLE? LOOK NO FURTHER

Hays Education has a team of 200 consultants across 40 offices, working in partnership with over 1,000 schools and dedicated to being your lifetime career partner.

For more information on the job roles below, as well as additional opportunities, visit educationweekjobs.co.uk/hays

SENCO HYDE HIGH SCHOOL

Tameside, MPS/UPS + TLR 1c

Hyde High School are seeking to appoint a talented and driven SENCO to lead a thriving inclusion department, which is highly regarded within school and within the local authority. You will lead the department, supporting and promoting an inclusive culture throughout the school, enabling all students to achieve their best.

Contact Hannah Connell on 07966 129657
or email hannah.connell@hays.com



TEACHER OF MATHEMATICS RICHARD CHALLONER SCHOOL

Outer London, MPS/UPS, £29,915-£45,766

A fantastic opportunity has arisen for a maths teacher to join Richard Challoner School where you will be valued and appreciated. The CPD programme has been recognised as exceptional and the caring and supportive environment means that staff turnover is incredibly low. Students make excellent progress (top 10% of schools for KS2-4 progress and attainment) and demonstrate excellent behaviour for learning.

Contact Iain Slinn on 07928 892960
or email richardchallonerschool@hays.com



TEACHER OF COMPUTER SCIENCE LANGLEY PARK SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Beckenham, £29,915-£45,766 + TLR

Due to the success of computer science and an increase in sixth form recruitment, Langley Park School for Girls are seeking to appoint a dynamic teacher of computer science for September 2021. LPGA is a calm, friendly and collaborative environment which offers strong staff support. Its CPD programme allows teachers time to pursue their own priorities.

Contact Hazel Baxter on 07872 672282
or email hazel.baxter@hays.com



Langley Park
School for Girls

CURRICULUM LEADER MODERN LANGUAGES (SPANISH) ST CUTHBERT'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

St Helens, Merseyside, MPR/UPR + TLR 2c

As curriculum leader of modern languages, you will be fully supported by an experienced team of colleagues who share a vision of excellent teaching and learning founded on collaborative planning, assessment and instruction. The school aspires to develop a curiosity to learn a foreign language, and the culture that goes along with that language.

Contact Hannah Connell on 07966 129657
or email hannah.connell@hays.com



St Cuthbert's Catholic High School
Live life in all its fullness



Chief Executive Officer

Salary: L28-L35 (£79,748 – £94,669)

Start Date: from January 2022 or earlier if possible

The Skylark Partnership (TSP) is seeking to appoint an exceptional leader, with a strong track record of school improvement, in a setting that includes SEND and/or alternative provision, to join us as our new Chief Executive Officer (CEO). We currently have two medical alternative provision academies in our Trust, Hospital and Outreach Education AP Academy in Northamptonshire and the Cherry Tree Learning Centre in Dudley, rated outstanding and good respectively by Ofsted, prior to conversion. We are very aspirational for our young people and do not allow their medical or mental health difficulties to limit their potential. We are passionate about making a difference to them and their families, giving hope for the future. We are keen to grow the Trust and encourage other alternative provisions for young people with medical needs to join us.

Our Trust is defined by our core values of resilience, respect, co-operation, compassion, honesty, trust, and hope, along with our ethical leadership. This is a rare leadership opportunity for someone to make their mark and contribute to ensuring that TSP continues as an educational influencer both regionally and nationally.

As an experienced professional, you will be able to demonstrate strategic leadership and excellent people management skills. You will lead and promote the Trust and be a driving force for innovation. You will be able to demonstrate extensive staff development experience and expertise. Most importantly, you will have a passion for education for young people with medical needs, ensuring that they have equal rights to and in line with their peers. You will need the determination to make a positive difference and commitment to continuous improvement across the Trust.

As an exceptional leader, you will be able to deliver and lead on the TSP vision and strategy. You will have the support of a committed Trust Board for your own professional development which will include mentoring and induction. You will be leading a passionate team of senior leaders across both academies to secure the best outcomes for our young people.

You will be an excellent ambassador with a proven ability to form productive partnerships, particularly with health colleagues, that support the long-term future of our highly ambitious MAT. We are looking for an outstanding individual to lead us into the next phase of our development. Emphasis on staff wellbeing is an integral part of our culture and we provide a highly supportive working environment.

If you are inspired by what you read in this pack, Trustees would encourage you to arrange an informal and confidential virtual meeting to discuss the post in more detail with the Chair, Frances Jones, prior to applying.

This appointment is supported by ASCL's Leadership Appointment Service. If you feel this opportunity is for you, please contact Bal at ASCL Leadership Appointment Service on 07492 353368 or email Bal.Kaur-Pierpoint@ascl.org.uk for further information. To arrange an informal and confidential conversation / virtual meeting about this post with Frances, please contact Bal.

Please email your completed application form to s.valentine-swallow@skylarkpartnershiptrust.co.uk.

Closing date for applications is: Monday 14th June at 12 noon

Shortlisting will take place on: Wednesday 16th June

Interviews will be held on: Fri 18th (remote), Tues 22nd (remote), Wed 23rd June (F2F).

Really Rewarding Opportunities for Exceptional People

shaw trust

Prospects, part of Shaw Trust, provides exceptional education services for all young people within Feltham Young Offenders Institution. We are proud to be able to help give these young people more confidence and a better chance of finding employment when they return to the community. Our 'Building Back Better' strategy incorporates smaller class sizes (4-6), working from home opportunities and flexible working hours.

A recent Ofsted report on Feltham Young Offenders Institution noted significant improvement in curriculum, achievements, learner progress, learner behaviour and the learning environment. We are leaders in the field of GCSE qualifications in the secure estate.

If you are looking for a new and very rewarding role, and enjoy helping young people to reach their potential, then we may have just the opportunity for you:

Engagement and Resettlement Worker

£26,500 pa

Full-time, Permanent, 37.5 hours per week

Job Ref: 22769

This interesting and rewarding role involves providing coaching for learners on an individual or group basis, to help them to achieve and progress and enabling them to develop their potential and progress to further study, HE or employment.

<https://jobs.shaw-trust.org.uk/VacancyInformation.aspx?Vid=28756>

Baking and Patisserie Tutor

£23,970 - £38,429 pa

Full-time, Permanent, 37.5 hours per week

Job Ref: 22763

We are looking for an exceptional Baking & Patisserie Tutor with a relevant teaching or training qualification (PTTLS, DTLS, PGCE or equivalent).

In addition to teaching a range of courses, you will develop the curriculum in-line with national requirements and local community/employment market needs, as well prepare and monitor appropriate syllabuses, schemes of work, lesson plans and assignments.

<https://jobs.shaw-trust.org.uk/VacancyInformation.aspx?Vid=28743>

Learning Support Specialist Tutor

£23,970 - £38,429 pa

Full-time, Permanent, 37.5 hours per week

Job Ref: 22764

This is a great opportunity for a Trauma Informed Practitioner and Learning Support Specialist to prepare and monitor a range of appropriate syllabuses, from schemes of work and lesson plans to assignments and teaching & learning materials.

<https://jobs.shaw-trust.org.uk/VacancyInformation.aspx?Vid=28744>

Functional Skills ICT User Tutor

£23,970 - £38,429 pa

Full-time, Permanent, 37.5 hours per week

Job Ref: 21889

<https://jobs.shaw-trust.org.uk/VacancyInformation.aspx?Vid=27211>

Business and Enterprise Teacher

£24,652 - £37,095 pa

Full-time, Permanent, 37.5 hours per week

Job Ref: 22812

<https://jobs.shaw-trust.org.uk/VacancyInformation.aspx?Vid=28747>

English GCSE Tutor

£23,970 - £38,429 pa

Full-time, Permanent, 37.5 hours per week

Job Ref: 21890

<https://jobs.shaw-trust.org.uk/VacancyInformation.aspx?Vid=27204>

Functional Skills Maths Tutor

£23,970 - £38,429 pa

Full-time, Permanent, 37.5 hours per week

Job Ref: 21887

<https://jobs.shaw-trust.org.uk/VacancyInformation.aspx?Vid=27203>

The above are great opportunities for qualified teachers (PGCE or equivalent), or those with extensive relevant industrial experience to teach a range of courses. In addition, you will develop the curriculum in-line with national requirements and local community/employment market needs, as well prepare and monitor appropriate syllabuses, schemes of work, lesson plans and assignments.

To apply or find out more about any of these roles, please visit our website:

<https://www.shawtrust.org.uk/careers/>

HEADTEACHER

THE CAMBRIDGE PARK ACADEMY

From January 2022



Salary: Leadership Group 7: L24 – L39* (£74,295 - £106,176) pay award pending
Salary Range: L26 – L32 (£78,025 - £90,379) Salary negotiable for the right candidate
Responsible to: CEO and Humber Education Trust Board

Due to the retirement of the current post holder, we are looking for a committed and ambitious Headteacher with a proven record of sustained school improvement to lead The Cambridge Park Academy.

The Cambridge Park Academy is a special school which caters for children and young people aged 3 to 19 with a range of severe and complex learning needs. A high proportion of learners have autistic spectrum conditions.

If you are innovative, creative, forward thinking, and have a passion for working with staff and communities to ensure children with additional needs get the education they deserve, this may be the opportunity for you to make a real difference.

For an informal discussion regarding the post and Humber Education Trust please contact Rachel Wilkes, CEO Humber Education Trust on 01482 755674 or at rwilkes@het.academy

Visits to the school are welcomed and can be arranged via the

school office on 01472 230110. Further information about the school can be found on the school website www.cambridgepark.co.uk

Application forms, job descriptions and person specifications are available from **Sharon Herrick**, Human Resources, Humber Education Trust at sherrick@het.academy

You can find out more about our Trust at www.humbereducationtrust.co.uk and can follow us on Twitter @HumberEdTrust

Electronic, signed application forms or a hard copy must be returned to Sharon Herrick in line with the timetable shown below.

- **Closing Date 21st June 2021 12pm**
- **Short listing will take place w/c 28th June 2021**
- **Interviews will take place w/c 5th July 2021**
- **You will be interviewed by members of the HET Trust Board and local governors from the school.**

www.humbereducationtrust.co.uk

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION (SECONDARY)

Location: Unity Schools Partnership Trust Office, Haverhill, Suffolk
(Schools are mainly in Suffolk, and also in Cambridge, Essex and Havering)

Salary: L37-L43 (up to £125,000 per annum for exceptional candidate)
(Teachers' Pension Scheme)
Job start: September 2021 / January 2022
Job term: Full time, Permanent

We are looking for an Executive Director of Education to lead improvement across the current ten secondary schools serving over 7,000 students. This is a new high-profile post which comes at an important point in the development of the trust. We are inviting candidates with extensive educational leadership experience, knowledge and understanding of creating and maintaining outstanding secondary practice to apply for the role. You will have a background as a Secondary Head and are likely to have been in a leadership role in an existing MAT of more than 3 schools (with at least 2-3 being secondary).

You may have the ambition to become a CEO in your career and for exceptional candidates the role of Deputy CEO maybe available.

The role will take a key part in setting the strategy for the Trust and its daily operations. This is an opportunity to help shape the future of secondary education and strive for excellence. An innovative and creative approach is key as well as the ability to influence and build relationships. The Trust is looking for a candidate to match the ambition they have and create a culture of collaboration to achieve it.

USP is a MAT of 30 schools, with approval to open four further new schools. The ambition is to achieve a step change in the quality of education provided by primary, secondary and special schools and to achieve top quartile performance by 2023.

For further information, please contact **Tim Coulson**, CEO on tcoulson@unitysp.co.uk or **07388 949917**

Closing Date: 9.00 am, Tuesday 25 May 2021

Interviews: Thursday 27 May 2021

Unity Schools Partnership is committed to equal opportunities, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. An enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check will be required.

UNITY SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP – WELCOMING DIVERSITY.



TRAINING MANAGER MATERNITY COVER (13 MONTHS, FULL TIME)



The Bell Foundation is a Cambridge based educational charity working to overcome exclusion through language education and is delivering its vision through four programmes which focus on pupils, young people and those involved with the criminal justice system for whom English is an Additional Language.

The Foundation has an exciting opportunity for a Training Manager (Maternity Cover) to lead on the operational management, development and implementation of training and resources across the Foundation's integrated programmes including the EAL Programme, Language for Results International, the ESOL Programme and the Criminal Justice Programme.

The successful candidate will manage a team of trainers to develop and deliver high-quality training and resources in line with agreed programme objectives and timelines. You will have a proven track record of operational management and course development and will have experience of working in a comparable role in either the UK or international context.

With excellent attention to detail and an eye for quality, you will ensure high standards for all outputs developed both internally and by external consultants or partners.

Training Manager: £37,565-£45,912

To apply

To download the application form please visit:

<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/about-us/vacancies/>

The Bell Foundation is committed to building a diverse and inclusive organisation to better represent the communities we serve. We welcome applications from all regardless of age, gender identity, disability, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, race or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, transgender status, or socio-economic background.

The Bell Foundation is committed to promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. A DBS check will be requested in the event of a successful application.

Closing date: 17:00 Tuesday 25 May 2021

Interviews: Tuesday 1 June and Thursday 3 June 2021



Assistant Principal – Inclusion Wymondham High Academy, Wymondham, Norfolk

We are looking to appoint an Assistant Principal to join our already strong and dynamic leadership team. This AP role is pivotal to the development of the Academy as part of the Enrich Learning Trust. The successful candidate will be responsible for leading a large, experienced team to deliver an outstanding inclusion strategy for the Academy. The Assistant Principal – Inclusion will lead our behaviour, wellbeing, safeguarding and attendance teams; supporting and challenging colleagues to provide the highest standard of provision. The successful candidate will liaise with parents, external agencies and medical professionals to support the needs of our young people. They will use data to drive improvement and will have high expectations of the pupils.

This is a hugely exciting opportunity and would suit not only experienced colleagues but those wishing to take the step into senior leadership. The successful candidate would be joining one of the largest and highest achieving schools in the region.



Principal

Paradigm Trust is looking to appoint a Principal for Murrayfield Primary Academy.

This is a great opportunity for a highly-motivated, ambitious professional who wants to make an impact.

Our vision is to develop and sustain great schools where we can make the biggest difference to pupils. We are strongly values-led (integrity, community, excellence) and work hard to be inclusive. We deliver high quality education and play a positive role in local and national education systems.

You will strive towards ensuring there is a positive ethos in the school in which individuals feel valued, and where you will encourage your team to ensure that the school provides an excellent education for all pupils.

If you have a passion to make a difference, we would love to hear from you.